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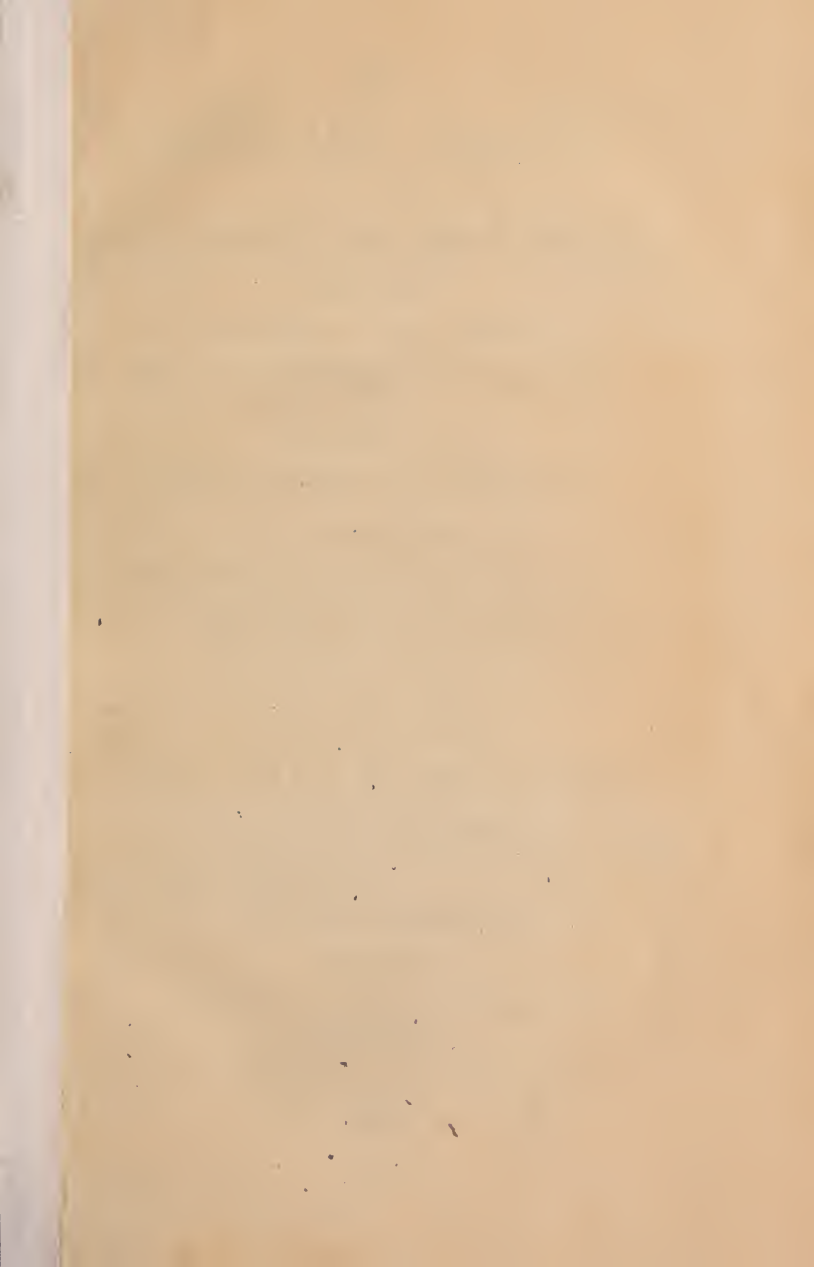
Book,

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Knollys, Hanserd, 1599?-
1691.

The life and death of that
old disciple of Jesus



THE
LIFE AND DEATH
OF THAT
OLD DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST,
AND EMINENT
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,
MR. HANSERD KNOLLYS,
WHO DIED IN THE
NINETY-THIRD YEAR OF HIS AGE.

WRITTEN WITH HIS OWN HAND TO THE YEAR 1672, AND
CONTINUED IN GENERAL, IN AN EPISTLE BY
MR. WILLIAM KIFFIN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED HIS
LAST LEGACY TO THE CHURCH.

Mark the perfect, and behold the upright; for the end of that
man is peace. PSAL. xxxvii. 37.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY E. HUNTINGTON, HIGH STREET,
BLOOMSBURY:

1812.

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

FOR THE YEAR 1881

EPISTLE TO THE READER.

IT was the special charge God gave to his people of old, that the many signal providences and mercies that they had received from him, should by them be recorded and left to their children's children, to the end that the memorial of his goodness might cause them to love and fear his name; and therefore they are required to bless the Lord from the fountain of Israel, from the very beginning of all his favours towards them. It is no small favour the servants of God are made partakers of, that his people of old have left so many testimonies of the gracious goodness and providences of God towards them; being a means to strengthen the faith of his people, in a dependency upon him, in all those variety of dispensations that do attend them in this

world: that whatever troubles they meet withal in this life, they may know that God deals no otherwise with them than he hath done to those that formerly have feared his name; and may be comforted with the same comforts and supports which his servants formerly have received from God. (The Author of these ensuing experiences was that ancient and faithful servant of God, Mr. HANSERD KNOLLYS, who departed this life in the ninety-third year of his age, having been employed in the works and service of Christ, as a faithful minister, for above sixty years; in which time he laboured without fainting under all the discouragements that attended him, being contented in all conditions, though never so poor in this world; under all persecutions and sufferings, so he might therein serve his blessed Lord and Saviour. I have myself known him for above fifty-four years, and can witness to the truth of many things left by him under his own hand. It is a great pity that the last twenty years of his life cannot be found amongst his writings, which to the

knowledge of many were attended with the same sufferings as formerly, and with the same holy behaviour under them. He was in that time a prisoner in the New Prison for the truth's sake many months, where with great cheerfulness he remained, comforting and encouraging all that came to visit him with many blessed exhortations to cleave to the Lord; none were sent empty away, without some spiritual instructions; and many of his fellow-prisoners were greatly strengthened and comforted by that heavenly counsel that dropped from his lips, spending much of his time there in prayer and study of the word of God, daily preaching to them the things that concern the kingdom of God.

He was chosen an Elder to a congregation in London, with whom he laboured for near fifty years, under many difficulties that attended him; but neither the poverty of the church, nor the persecutions that he endured, were any temptation to him to neglect his duty towards them, but was willing to be poor with them in their poverty, and

to suffer with them in their sufferings. He was willing to labour for his own, and his family's bread, by keeping a school, when the church were not able to supply his wants, although he wanted not opportunities to have advanced himself in the world if he would have accepted of them; but like a faithful Pastor he chose rather to be poor and suffer affliction, than to leave the duty and work he was called unto, until he arrived to the age of above ninety years. When he found weaknesses attend him, his love and affection to that poor church was such, that he was daily exercising his thoughts to find an able minister for them in his room; declaring to several of his friends, what great satisfaction it would be to him to see one settled amongst them; and that he would be willing to part with something of that little which he had, (if there was need,) for his maintenance from the church, towards his support: and it pleased God to provide one for them, to their great satisfaction and rejoicing. So great was his natural affection and tender care for his daughter and grand-

children, who he knew were like to come to some distress, that he did accordingly at that great age again undertake the teaching of a school, that he might do to the uttermost of his ability to provide for them.

And having finished his work, he fell asleep in the Lord, September 19, 1691. That these experiences may be of use to all those that read the same, is the desire and prayer of

Thine in the Lord,

WILLIAM KIFFIN.

THE
LIFE AND DEATH
OF
MR. HANSERD KNOLLYS.

I, HANSERD KNOLLYS, was born at Cawkwell, near Louth, in Lincolnshire, and was removed thence with my parents to Scarthe, near Market Grimsby, in the same County. About the sixth year of my age, I fell into a great pond, and was preserved from being drowned by the water bearing up my clothes, till my father came, leaped in, and pulled me out. About the tenth year of my age, I having construed the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah in my latin bible to my father, he took occasion to dis-

suade me from the love and use of strong drink, and said he would give me twenty pounds if I would drink water, but withal told me he would not have me do it to the prejudice of my health; and charged me to make no vow to God so to do, for I did not understand how sacred a thing a vow is, and how it binds the soul, and that it would be sin not to perform my vow: whereupon I drank water eleven years, and never in all that time drank any wine or strong drink. About that time my father kept a tutor in his house to teach me and my brother, who was a godly and conscientious young man; he gave us good instructions for our souls, and convinced us of the sin of sabbath-breaking, and of disobedience to our parents. After my father had preferred our tutor to a place of greater profit, we went a little while to Grimsby free school, till my father got another tutor for us into his house: and one day going to the free school, we fell out and fought: upon which I was much convinced that we had sinned against God, and against our father, who had often told us

we were brethren, and ought not to fall out by the way: and I said, ‘ Brother, we have sinned, come let us be friends, and pray God to pardon this and other our sins;’ whereupon we both kneeled down upon the ploughed land, and I prayed, wept, and made supplication to God as well as I could, and found so great assistance from God at that time, that I never used any set form of prayer afterwards; which done we both kissed each other, and went to school.

Afterwards I went to Cambridge, and there a godly minister preached on Hosea iv. 17; his doctrine was, that the joining to sin by often committing it after conviction of conscience for it, did provoke God to give over many to the power of their corruptions, and let them alone to die in their sins. I was thereby convinced that it was my case, for I had oftentimes broken the sabbath after conviction, and I had disobeyed my parents, and had often told untruths. The same Lord’s day at night, another godly minister preached at five o’clock upon Ephes. ii. 3; and thereby I was much

more convinced of my sinful condition, and that I was a child of wrath, without Christ, and grace, &c. which work of conviction remained strongly upon me above one year; under which I was filled with great horror, and fears of hell, sore buffetings and temptations of the devil, and made to possess the sins of my youth: but yet I prayed daily, heard all the godly ministers I could, read and searched the holy scriptures, read good books, got acquainted with gracious christians then called Puritans, kept several days of fasting and prayer alone, wherein I did humble my soul for my sins, and begged pardon and grace of God for Christ's sake; grew strict in performing holy duties and in reformation of my own life, examining myself every night, confessing my sins and mourning for them, and had a great zeal for God, and an indignation against actual sins, both committed by myself and others.

(June 29, 1629, I was ordained Deacon, and the next day, I was also ordained Presbyter by the Bishop of Peterborough, having preached above sixteen sermons before I

would be ordained, by way of trial of my ability for that great work of the ministry.

After my ordination the Bishop of Lincoln gave me a small living at Humberstone, where I preached twice every Lord's day, and once every holy-day. That which made me strict and laborious in preaching was partly the work of conviction upon my conscience, but more especially a providential acquaintance that I had gotten with a very godly old widow in Gainsborough, where I taught the free school before I came to Humberstone, who told me of one called a Brownist, who used to pray and expound scriptures in his family, whom I went sometimes to hear, and with whom I had conference and very good counsel. Whilst I was at Humberstone, there lived a very religious widow, who falling sick sent for me, and charged me that I would not depart her house in the day-time until she ended or mended, least satan should tempt her above her strength. The Doctor of physic had given her over, some godly ministers, friends and relations did take leave of her as a dying

woman. She received nothing for several days but a little julep, which was put in her mouth with a spoon and ran most of it out again, laying speechless two or three days, her family mourning over her, and expecting her death every hour. I had brought some of my books to her house, and was studying her funeral sermon, and when I had almost finished the same the devil set upon me with a violent suggestion, That the scriptures are not the word of God. He had suggested this temptation to me divers times before, but prevailed not; now the tempter assaulted me with this argument: whatever you ask in the name of Christ, God will do it, but that scripture was not true; and if I would put it now upon trial I should find it not to be true, for if I would ask the woman's life in the name of Christ, God will not grant it, and thereby I should know the scriptures were not true; nor are they the word of God, for his word is true. To which I answered, 'Satan, thou art a liar, a deceiver, and a false accuser. The holy scriptures are the word of God, and the scriptures of truth;

and seeing thou hast often tempted me in this kind, and now dost assault me again, that I may for ever silence thee thou wicked and lying devil, I will trust in God, and act faith in the name of Christ in that very word of his truth which thou hast now suggested. I will leave my study, and go and pray for her, and believe that God will hear my prayers through the intercession of Jesus Christ, and restore her life and health, that thou mayest be found a liar :’ whereupon I went into the parlour where she lay speechless, without any visible motion, or use of any senses ; and having locked the door, (candles being in the room,) I kneeled down by her bed-side and prayed above half an hour, using my voice, and then she began to stir, toss, and struggle so much that I was constrained to stand up, and holding her in her bed still prayed over her. Satan then gave me a great interruption, and suggested to me she was dying, and these were the pangs of death upon her ; I, notwithstanding this assault of the devil, was assisted by the Holy Spirit to pray and believe

still, and in a short time she lay very quietly, and I kneeled down again and prayed fervently; and within half an hour, whilst I was yet praying, she said, ‘The Lord hath healed me; I am restored to health.’ Then I returned praises to God, in which she joined with me, lifting up her eyes and hands, still saying, ‘I am healed.’ I rose up from my knees, and asked her how she did; ‘O Sir,’ said she, ‘God hath heard your prayers, and hath made me whole. Blessed be his holy name.’ Then I unlocked the door, and some of her kinsfolks and servants being at the door came in and asked me if she were dead, to whom I answered, No. Then they asked me how she did, I bade them go to her and ask herself. They replied, she had been speechless four days, I told them she could speak now; and as soon as they came to her bed-side she lifted up herself and said, ‘I am well, the Lord hath heard prayer and healed me, I am very weak and sore in my bones, but I am in health, I pray you give me something to eat:’ and as soon as they brought her some broth,

she sat up and eat it, and took some of her julep; and from that time received strength, and the next day she did rise and walked with a staff: which being heard of, many godly ministers and christians came to visit her, and to know the truth of what was told them touching her recovery. I told them it was not any thing in me, but it was the Lord that had done it for his own glory, and to silence satan, who was never suffered to tempt me in that kind afterwards; God bruised satan under my feet, and my Lord Jesus Christ made a conquest of him, and gave me the victory, and helped me to give him the glory of it.

The next year after this I married a wife, with whom I lived forty years, (by whom I had issue seven sons and three daughters,) who was a holy, discreet woman, and a meet help for me in the ways of her household, and also in the way of holiness; who was my companion in all my sufferings, travels, and hardships, that I endured for the gospel. She departed this life April 30, 1671, in full assurance of eternal life and salvation.

Presently after I was married I was convinced of some things about the worship of God, (which I had conformed unto,) to be sinful; to wit, the surplice, the cross in baptism, and admitting wicked persons to the Lord's supper, whereupon I resigned my living to the Bishop, who offered me a better living: I told him I could not conform any longer, and would do nothing but preach, which he connived at for two or three years. Shortly after I was convinced that my ordination received from the Bishop was not right; and though I had preached for some years by virtue of that ordination, I had not received any seal from Christ of my ministry; for though many had been reformed and moralized, yet I knew not that I had been instrumental to convert any souls to God: and thereupon I renounced that ordination, and silenced myself, resolving not to preach any more, until I had a clear call and commission from Christ to preach the gospel. To that end and purpose I gave myself to prayer, day and night, for several weeks together; and at last being at prayer in a wood

at Anderby in Lincolnshire, where I had preached before, and prayed with loud cries and tears that Christ would count me worthy, and put me into the ministry, and shew me how to glorify God in the ministry; and though I was much melted and enlarged in prayer at that time, yet I had no answer from the Lord. After prayer I walked and meditated under the wood-side till sunset, and then went homeward, resolved not to preach till the Lord made my call to that great work of preaching the gospel clear to me. As I was going home, an answer to my prayers was given me in these words, ‘Go to Mr. Wheelwright, and he shall tell thee, and shew thee how to glorify God in the ministry;’ but I heard no voice, nor did I see any vision, only those words were plainly and articulately spoken into my ears and understanding: at which I was astonished and said, ‘Lord let me not be deluded nor deceived;’ then was brought to my mind that passage of Cornelius sending to Peter, who should tell him what he ought to do; whereupon I was fully per-

suaded it was an answer to my prayers from the Lord, and I was filled with such joy, that I went on my way rejoicing, leaping and praising God. The next morning going to seek out Mr. Wheelwright, who was a silenced minister, whom I had heard of by some christians, that he had been instrumental to convert many souls, but I knew him not, nor did I know where he was, yet I was resolved to find him out, for I had heard that he was near Lincoln, about twenty-five miles from me, where he lived privately. As I was getting up on horseback, one of my neighbours coming by asked me whither I was riding, to whom I said I did not certainly know, I was going to Mr. Wheelwright, who was as I heard about Lincoln. ‘No,’ said he, ‘Mr. Wheelwright and his family came to dwell at a village which is but three miles from my house, for,’ said he, ‘I saw him come thither but three nights since, with his family and household goods, in a coach and a waggon.’ Thither I rode presently, and found it so; and I told Mr. Wheelwright that yesternight I was

praying as before, and was sent unto him by the Lord, &c. After he had asked me many things about the work of God upon my soul, and I had told him, he said I could not glorify God neither in the ministry, nor in any other way or work, for I was building my soul upon a covenant of works, and was a stranger to the covenant of grace: at which I was startled, troubled, and somewhat amazed, but I told him I was assured God had sent me to him, and by his mouth I should be instructed how to glorify God in the ministry of the gospel; and I did earnestly intreat and beseech him to apply himself to give me his counsel and directions touching that matter.

Then Mr. Wheelwright opened to me the nature of the covenant of free grace, which I confessed to him I was a stranger to in a great measure, having been only under legal convictions and a spirit of bondage; and though I had some discoveries of my want of Christ, yet I had sought righteousness as it were by the works of the law, and got my peace by performing duties, and rested on

them. Mr. Wheelwright desired me to consider what he had said to me, and to come to him two or three days after; so I left him at that time, and went home exceeding sorrowful about my soul's condition : but I gave myself to prayer, and begged of God to teach me the covenant of grace, and to that end I searched the scriptures; and I heard one Mr. How preach upon Gal. ii. 20. "I live by the faith of the Son of God;" whereby I saw that I had lived a life of works, and not of faith. Then I began to see a necessity of believing in Christ for pardon and salvation; and hearing the minister say that Christ was the author, root, and only foundation of saving faith, and that God did give the faith of evidence, Heb. xi. 1, in some new covenant promise, Gal. iii. 14; and that those promises were given of God, 2 Pet. i. 4; I prayed that night, and next morning, and in the night season, that God would give me such a promise. The next day I locked myself in the church, and in the chancel, or choir so called, I prayed very earnestly, mourning and bemoaning myself and my

soul's condition, fearing, and with great brokenness of spirit and many tears expressed my fears, that God would leave me and forsake me, and then I should utterly perish for ever. At this time that promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," was given me, which promise stopped me a little in prayer, and I brake forth into this kind of expostulation with God, saying, ' Lord who am I ! I am a vile sinful sinner, the chief of sinners, most unworthy of pardon and salvation ! How, Lord ! never leave thee nor forsake thee ? Oh, infinite mercy ! Oh free grace ! who am I ? I have been a graceless soul, a formal professor, a legal performer of holy duties, and have gone about to establish mine own righteousness, which I now see is but filthy rags,' &c. Then God gave me those two promises, Isai. xliii. 22. 25 ; and Isai. liv. 9. 10 ; " But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee

to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee:” the application of which promises filled my soul with joy and peace in believing, so that I brake forth into praises and thanksgiving.

The next day I went again to Mr. Wheelright, and told him what God had done for my soul, who said unto me, ‘Now you are somewhat prepared to preach Jesus Christ

and the gospel of free grace to others, having been taught it of God, and having heard and learned Jesus Christ yourself;’ and he advised me to wait still upon God in prayer, and Christ would appear again to me by his Holy Spirit in his word, and shew me and teach me how to preach. I went home again, and continued in prayer; and one day begging earnestly of God that if he had designed me to that great work of preaching the gospel, that then he would give me some testimony out of his holy word of his calling me thereunto, whereupon these words were spoken by his Spirit to my heart; “ I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;” Acts xvi. 26. whence I believed that now I had received a call and commission from my Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel of his free grace; and I blessed God, and expected a further appearance of Jesus Christ unto me. That night in my sleep Christ put into my mind, that the next

Lord's day I should preach on Rom.viii. 1. ;
 " 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ;' " and he dictated to me in my sleep, what doctrine I should preach from that text. The next day I went and told all this to Mr. Wheelright, who said, ' Now my beloved Brother and fellow-labourer in the gospel of the grace of God, Christ hath given you authority, a call and a commission to preach : I pray you be humble and holy, and delay not to do your master's work,' or words to that effect. That night in my sleep the Lord taught me more, and the third night also ; and I retained it all in my memory, and writ it down, and searched the scriptures which I received in my sleep for the confirmation of my doctrine : and the next day, being the Lord's day, I preached that which I had received from the Lord, and God made it useful and powerful to conversion as appeared to me afterwards. Thus I was night by night taught of God to preach the doctrine of free grace, according

to the tenor of the new and everlasting covenant, for three or four years together; whereby very many sinners were converted, and many believers were established in the faith. In which three or four years space I preached in three several places, at And-
 derby, at Fulleby on the Hill, and at Wain-
 fleet, where I was silenced, and from thence
 removed to London, and thence to New
 England with my wife and child.

About the year 1636, I was persecuted, and prosecuted in the High Commission Court, by virtue of a warrant wherewith I was apprehended in Boston, and kept a prisoner in the man's house who served the warrant upon me; but God helped me to convince him, and he was so greatly terrified in his conscience that he set open his doors, and let me go away. Before I quitted my native country, I tarried so long in London, that when I went aboard, I had but six brass farthings left, and no silver nor gold, only my wife had five pounds that I knew not of, which she gave me when we came there. By the way my little child

died with convulsion fits, our beer and water stank, our biscuit was green, yellow, and blue, moulded and rotten, and our cheese also; so that we suffered much hardship, being twelve weeks on our passage; but God was gracious to us and led us safe through those great deeps, and ere we went on shore came one and enquired for me, and told me a friend that was gone from Boston to Rhode Island had left me his house to sojourn in; to which we went and two families more with us, who went suddenly to their friends and other relations in the country; and I being poor was necessitated to work daily with my hoe, for the space of almost three weeks. The Magistrates were told by the ministers that I was an Antinomian, and desired they would not suffer me to abide in their district: but within the time limited by their law in that case, two strangers coming to Boston from Piscattuah, hearing of me by a mere accident, got me to go with them to that plantation, and to preach there, where I remained about four years. Being sent for back to England by

my aged father, I returned with my wife, and one child about three years old, and she was then great with another ; we came safe to London on the 24th of December, 1641 ; in which year the massacre in Ireland broke forth, and the next year wars in England between King and Parliament. I was still poor and sojourned in a lodging till I had but sixpence left, and knew not how to provide for my wife and child ; but having prayed to God, and encouraged my wife to trust in God, and to remember former experiences, and especially that word of promise God had given us and would perform to us, Heb. xiii. 5 ; having paid for my lodging I went out, not knowing whither God's good hand of providence would lead me, to receive something towards my present subsistence. About seven or eight doors from my lodging a woman met me in the street, and told me she came to seek me, and her husband sent her to tell me that there was a lodging provided and prepared in his house, by some christian friends, for me and my wife. I told her my present con-

dition, and went along with her to her house, and there she gave me twenty shillings, which Dr. Bastwick, a late sufferer, had given her for me, and some linens for my wife, which I received, and told her and her husband I would fetch my wife and child and lodge there. So I returned with great joy, and my wife was very much affected with this mercy and divine providence, being so suitable and seasonable a supply unto us; and she said, ‘Oh dear husband, how sweet it is to live by faith, and trust God upon his bare word; let us rely upon him whilst we live, and trust him in all straits:’ with many such like expressions. After we had returned praises to God we went to our new lodging, where we found all things necessary provided for us, and all charges paid for fifteen weeks; and my wife, being bruised much on shipboard, had sore labour, and lay under great weakness above ten weeks: all which time two Doctors, an Apothecary and a Surgeon, did daily attend her, and administered unto her freely without any money; and at the

end of sixteen weeks we had seven pounds that was given us by some christian friends. I had spoken to some of those friends to get me some scholars, and I would provide me a convenient place to teach school; for I had rather work for my bread than be maintained by the charity of good christians. One morning came a friend and told me a school-master on Great Tower Hill died last night, and if I would come presently I might probably get some of his scholars; so I went and got three or four scholars that day. My school was very much enlarged, and I continued there till I was chosen Master of Mary-Axe free school, whither I carried sixty scholars from Great Tower Hill; and within one year I had above one hundred and forty scholars, and sixteen boarders. This free school, and all the benefits thereof, I left to go into the Parliament's army, and preached freely to the common soldiers; until I perceived the Commanders sought their own things, more than the cause of God and his people, breaking their vows and solemn engagements;

whereupon I left the army, and came to London again. Shortly after, the Committee for plundered ministers sent their warrant to the then keeper in Ely House to apprehend me, and bring me in safe custody before them ; who took me out of my house, carried me to Ely House, and there kept me prisoner several days without any bail, and at last carried me before the Committee ; who asked me several questions, to which I gave them sober and direct answers. Among others, the Chairman, Mr. White, asked me who gave me authority to preach, I told him, the Lord Jesus Christ ; then he asked me if I were a minister, I answered, I was made a priest by the prelate of Peterborough, but I had renounced that ordination, and I did here again renounce the same. They asked me by what authority I preached in Bow Church, I told them after I had refused the desire of the then church-wardens three times, one day after another, their want of supply and earnestness prevailed with me, and I went thither ; they opened the pulpit door and I went up and preached upon Isai.

lviii ; and gave them such an account of that sermon, (thirty ministers of the Assembly of Divines, then so called, being present,) that they could not gainsay, but bade me withdraw, and said nothing unto me : nor would my gaoler take any charge of me, for the Committee had called for him and did chide him, and threaten to turn him out of his place, for keeping me prisoner so many days ; so I went away without any blame, or paying of any fees. Not long after I was brought before the Committee of Examinations, being accused to them that I occasioned great disturbance to ministers and people in Suffolk ; which I gave so good and satisfactory an account of to them, that upon their report thereof to the House of Commons, they ordered, that I might preach in any part of Suffolk, when the minister of that place did not preach. This was all the satisfaction I reaped for the charge of sixty pounds which that trouble cost me, to clear my innocence, and the honour of the gospel ; which expense I put upon Christ's score ; for whose gospel, and preaching Jesus

Christ from that text, Col. iii. 11 ; “ But Christ is all, and in all,” I was stoned out of the pulpit; prosecuted at a privy Sessions; fetched out of the country sixty miles up to London; and was constrained to bring up four or five witnesses of good repute and credit, to prove and vindicate myself from false accusations. Some time after that I was summoned before a Committee in the chamber, (called the Queen’s Court,) at Westminster, whereof Mr. Leigh was Chairman, for preaching without holy orders. (To which I answered, that I was in holy orders : some of the Committee told the Chairman I had renounced my ordination by the Bishop, in the Committee for plundered ministers; I confessed that I did so, but that I was ordained since in a church of God, according to the order of the gospel of Christ; the manner whereof I then declared to the Committee before Mr. Nye, and other ministers there present.) At last the Committee, by their Chairman, commanded me to preach no more; I told them I would preach the gospel, both pub-

lickly and from house to house; for it was more equal to obey Christ who had commanded me, than them who forbid me: and so I went away, and ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

I was then pastor to a church which I had gathered two or three years before, in the year 1645, with whom I have walked ever since; except that I was absent from them sometimes upon just occasions and with their leave, or forced from them by violent persecution.) My chiefest means of livelihood hath been by teaching school, wherein God was pleased to make me serviceable in my generation; to communicate liberally to the poor of the church, and to strangers that stood in need; and plentifully to provide all things necessary and convenient for my wife and children, through God's blessing upon my honest labours. I received from the church always according to their ability, most of the members of the church being poor; but I coveted no man's gold nor silver, but chose rather to labour, knowing, "It is more blessed to give than to re-

ceive:" nor did I neglect the whole of my duty as a pastor, but preached two or three times in the week, and visited the members of the church from house to house, especially when they were sick. During twenty-five years now past, the church hath continued in the Apostles doctrine, fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer; without division and separation of any part thereof, or party therein: though some few particular members, being led away by some error in their judgment, have forsaken the assembling of themselves with the church as the manner of some is, and was in the Apostles time. In the year 1660, upon Venner's rising, and others that with him made an insurrection in the city of London, myself and many other godly and peaceable persons, were taken out of their own dwelling houses, and brought to Wood-street Compter; and many to Newgate and other prisons, though we were innocent, and knew not of their design: which time I suffered imprisonment eighteen weeks, till we were delivered by an act of pardon upon the

King's coronation, unto all offenders, except murderers. We were above four hundred prisoners kept all this time in Newgate, because we refused to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. After I was set at liberty out of prison, I went to Holland, and thence up into Germany, with my wife and two of my children, where we sojourned about two or three years; and in my absence, one Colonel Legge, a Bed-chamber man, and Lieutenant of the Ordnance, charged me in the Court of Exchequer for keeping a house and ground from the King; against whom I stood suit by my Attorney. But when Col. Legge could not get my house from me by law, he and some others brought a troop of soldiers, and took it by force; thrust out those persons I had left in possession, and kept possession by soldiers, both of my house, garden, and goods, which had cost me above 700*l.* purchase. This estate I bought of the Artillery Company of London, to whom I paid 300*l.* and laid out 400*l.* more in building upon the ground; the whole of which I had paid for. I had at

the same time 200*l.* in Weaver's Hall, which was given away to the King, among many greater sums of other men's money. I spent above 150*l.* more in Holland and Germany ; and when I had spent all that, I was forced to sell all my goods there, to bring me to England again : in which return I met with two remarkable acts of providence towards me, my wife, and two children. I had agreed with a Skipper at Cullen in Germany to carry me and my family to Rotterdam, for a sum of money, and he was to pay all the tolls and licences ; which he did at two or three places until we came where we were strangers, and then he made me pay licences at two places ; and at a place called Rurote, upon the river Rhine, he made me pay both toll and licence, and kept me there two or three days at great charges. My wife sitting down very sad in a harbour or victualing-house, came in a gentleman, and observing of her asked me what the gentlewoman ailed, I told him she was my wife ; and he understanding the latin tongue, asked me what the matter was ; I told him all my

case and what my troubles were. ‘ Well,’ said he, ‘ if you be a son of Abraham, God will deliver you;’ so he went into his chamber, and sent for the skipper and toll-masters, and caused him to produce our agreement; and understanding how he had wronged me, (he being lord and chief over the toll-masters there,) he commanded them to take our goods from him, and to hire us another skipper to carry us and our goods to Rotterdam; he also made the skipper that had done me wrong, to return me so much as I had paid for licences all the way thither. After we were come to Rotterdam, and my wife and son and daughter were gone to England, God made two catholics in Cullen, instrumental to prevail with the Prince Dewit, to send me, by a bill of exchange, 160 Rix Dollars for a house that I had built in his country, and could not sell; which money I received at Rotterdam, and then came over to England myself, and came to my wife and children, whom I found at a friend’s house in London. Again I set upon teaching school, and by God’s blessing upon

my honest labours, have provided things honest, necessary, and convenient for my family. To my eldest son I had given sixty pounds per annum, during his life, which he enjoyed above twenty-one years, ere he died. To my next son, that lived to be married, I gave the full value of 250*l.* in money, house, school, and household goods, and left him fifty scholars in his school-house. To my only daughter then living, I gave upon her marriage, above 300*l.* in money, annuity, plate, linen, and household stuff; and left her husband fifty scholars in the said school-house, in partnership with my said son. To my youngest son, that lived to be married, I gave more than 300*l.* sterling; besides it cost me above sixty pounds in his apprenticeship, and forty pounds afterwards.

Thus my heavenly Father made up my former losses, with his future blessings, even in outward substance; besides a good increase of grace and experience, in the space of forty years, that I and my dear faithful wife lived together. We removed several

times with our whole family ; whereof once from Lincolnshire to London, and from London to New England. Once from England into Wales; twice from London into Lincolnshire; once from London to Holland, and from thence into Germany, and thence to Rotterdam, and thence to London again. In these removings I gained great experiences of God's faithfulness, goodness, and truth, in his great and precious promises; and I have gained some experience of my own heart's deceitfulness, and the power of my own corruptions; the reigning power of Christ, and his captivating and subduing my sins; making conquests of the devil, world, and sin, and then giving me the victory, and causing me to triumph, and to bless his most holy name. Three things made my latter sufferings very easy to be endured; 1, The former straits and hardships which I had undergone with patience. 2, The present lively acts and exercise of grace, especially faith and hope, under those latter and greater trials. 3, The light of God's countenance, and the full assurance of his

love, and of eternal life. I would not want those experiences and teachings that my soul hath enjoyed, for all that ever I suffered.

My wilderness-mercies, sea-mercies, city-mercies, and prison-mercies, afforded me very many and strong consolations. The spiritual sights of the glory of God, the divine sweetness of the spiritual and providential presence of my Lord Jesus Christ, and the joys and comforts of the Holy and Eternal Spirit, communicated to my soul; together with suitable and seasonable scriptures of truth; have so often, and so powerfully revived, refreshed, and strengthened my heart in the days of my pilgrimage, trials, and sufferings, that the sense, yea the life and sweetness thereof abides still upon my heart, and hath engaged my soul to live by faith, to walk humbly, and to desire and endeavour to excel in holiness, to God's glory and the example of others. Though I confess many of the Lord's ministers, and some of the Lord's people, have excelled and outshined me, with whom God hath not been at

so much cost, nor pains, as he hath been at with me: I am a very unprofitable servant, but yet by grace I am what I am. In the beginning of my ministry I studied in the forenoon, visited my religious acquaintance in the afternoon, and some of my natural relations. I did preach constantly twice, often three times, and some Lord's days four times; at Holton at seven in the morning; at Humberstone at nine; at Scarthe at eleven; at Humberstone at three o'clock, all in the same day. I also preached every holy-day once; at every burial, poor or rich. I have most commonly preached three or four times every week, if in any measure of health for above forty years together; except now and then I got some godly person to preach for me, but rarely. When I was in prison, I did preach usually every day, if well; and God was pleased to confirm my call unto that great work. 1, By the conversion of many sinners, who having declared the dealings of God with their souls, testified God did convince them, convert them, and establish many of them by my

ministry, through the powerful and effectual operation of his Holy Spirit, and word, preached by me unto them. 2, By some healing power of God put forth upon the sick and infirm bodies of several persons, who were suddenly restored to health immediately in time of prayer with them, or by and through faith in Jesus Christ, especially in this City of London; and of the sickness called the plague, both in former years and in the year 1665. Not to me, but to God, be given glory and praise, for in his name, through faith in his name, they were healed. 3, By enabling me, standing by me, and strengthening me, by his Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace, to preach the gospel, in season and out of season, with all boldness; neither being ashamed, nor afraid to bear my testimony for Christ, his gospel, churches, ministry, worship, and ordinances, against the antichristian powers, ministers, worshippers, and traditions of the beast, the great mystical whore, and the false prophet. Nor have I been terrified by the adversary, by virtue of the Acts of Parliament, touching

private meetings and conventicles, commencing May 10, 1670. I was taken at a meeting in George Yard, and the then Lord Mayor committed me to the Compter in Bishopsgate for preaching there; but having favour in the eyes of the keepers, I had liberty to preach to the prisoners, twice every day of the week, in the Common Hall, where most of the prisoners came and heard me; and some of them blessed God that ever I came to that prison. Soon after I was set at liberty at the Sessions in Old Bailey, God made me his prisoner, by a sharp and painful distemper in my bowels, by which he brought me near to the grave; but in time of my greatest extremity, God remembered mercy, forgave mine iniquity, healed my disease, and restored my life from death. No tongue can express my pains, yet God gave me much patience, wherein I possessed my soul. I had, 1, A very clear discovery from the Lord of the causes why he so contended with me; one was the meritorious cause of some former visitations, and especially of this sore disease. 2, I saw the

sin of my sinful nature, which was not so crucified as that it was destroyed, but I found some motions of it of late stirring in my sinful heart. The sense of this was a very sore burthen and trouble to my soul in this day of my calamity, for which I mourned in secret before the Lord, and lay at the throne of grace loathing myself, and begging that God would kill that sin and destroy it, and all the rest of my sins; and received this answer, his grace was sufficient for me, he had pardoned, and he would subdue and destroy that and all other mine iniquities, according to his everlasting covenant of free grace. Satan was sometimes very busy during this time of sickness, and tempted me sorely in the night season, suggesting to me that I was but an hypocrite, that my evidences for heaven were not good; whom God helped me to resist steadfastly in the faith, and he fled away. Another cause why the Lord now contended with me, was for the trial and exercise of those graces which he had given me. It was the trial of my faith, and the exercise of my patience, and that I

might be to his praise, and an example unto weak believers whose eyes were upon me, and were observing and hearkening how I did behave myself under all the great rebukes and chastisements of the Lord upon me: for they had heard that God had taken one grand-child away by death, and visited another, who was above sixteen years old, with the small-pox, and she was likely to die; and one son died and was buried during my sickness; and mine eldest son was dead and buried in the country, whereof I was told before I was recovered: my other son's wife had sore labour, a dead man-child, and she likely to die; and my dear loving wife then began to be sorely afflicted with a pain and swelling in her face, of which she since died.

But God did give a proportionable measure of faith and patience to me his poor unworthy servant, under all these his fatherly chastisements; he strengthened me with strength in my soul, and upheld me with the right hand of his righteousness, so that I fainted not nor was I weary, his rod and his staff did comfort

me ; he brought out my will unto a free submission, subjection, and resignation to his own most wise, and holy will. Yea, my Father's visitations so preserved my soul, that I sang and rejoiced under the sights and smiles of Christ, even whilst I was sighing and sorrowing for my transgressions.

Two learned, well practised, and judicious Doctors of physic had daily visited me, and consulted several days together, and I was fully persuaded that they did what they possibly could to effect a cure : and knew also, that God did not succeed their honest and faithful endeavours with his blessing. Although God had given a signal and singular testimony of his special blessing by each of them unto others of their patients, at least sixteen, at the same time, I resolved to take no more physick, but would apply to that holy ordinance of God appointed by Jesus Christ, the great Physician of value, in James v. 14. 15. “ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church ; and let them pray over him, anoint-

ing him with oil in the name of the Lord : and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him :” and I sent for Mr. Kiffin, and Mr. Vavasor Powell, who prayed over me, and anointed me with oil in the name of the Lord. The Lord did hear prayer, and heal me ; for there were many godly ministers and gracious saints that prayed day and night for me, (with submission to the will of God,) that the Lord would spare my life, and make me more serviceable to his church, and to the saints, whose prayers God heard ; and as an answer to their prayers I was perfectly healed, but remained weak long after. My dear wife was greatly afflicted day and night, but the Lord gave her a great measure of faith and patience even to the end. She enjoyed the light of God’s countenance, had full assurance of his love, the pardon of her sins, and of eternal life ; and having patiently endured six months sore pains, upon the thirtieth of the second month, called April, 1671 (being the Lord’s

day,) about four or five o'clock, slept in Jesus. I was doing my Master's work at that time in the congregation, and towards the end of my sermon had a strong impulse upon my spirit that my dear wife was departing; and in my prayer after sermon was drawn forth by faith to commend her to God that gave her to me, and blessed him for receiving her soul into Abraham's bosom, and placing her among the spirits of just men made perfect in the paradise of God.

Since the death of my wife it hath pleased God to stretch forth his hand upon my only son then living, and to afflict him with a deep consumption, occasioned as I judge by grief for his dearly loving and beloved Mother, for he drooped ever since she was first taken ill of that distemper of rheum, which fell from her head into her face, of which she died; and he hath been worse and worse ever since. Having had great expences and a great charge of dear relations, and owing some considerable debts, I was necessitated to teach school again in my old age, that I might pay my debts, suc-

cour my dear relations, and not be too great a burthen to the church of God: and this I have willingly and cheerfully undertaken, that if persecution do come upon me again, (which I expect and prepare for,) and I shall be haled to prison or forced to fly, it may be my mercy and comfort, (as at all other times of my many removals in the days of my pilgrimage and persecutions,) that no person shall have any occasion to come to me and say, ‘ Pay me what you owe me before you go ;’ for I desire to owe no man any thing but love, and honestly to pay every man his own : and if death seize on my body, that I may leave enough of my own behind me to pay all my debts, and a little for the relief of God’s poor, and some of my poorest natural relations. I had a summoning in June last to prepare myself for the grave, by a sudden and sore fit of the wind-cholick and vomiting ; and on the 3d of October last, 1671, I had another summons to be ready to depart this life, by another sudden, more violent tormenting fit of the wind-cholick and vomiting. I am

alarmed by these awakening visitations of the Lord to prepare and be ready, that when my Lord and Master comes, or calls for me to come to him, I may be found so doing that he may say, “ Well done thou good and faithful servant ; enter thou also into the joys of thy Master.”

The next trial my heavenly Father saw needful for me to be exercised under, was the sickness and death of my then only living son, my Isaac, my most loving and beloved son, who was translated the 15th day of November, 1671 ; which great trial and loss God made gain to him, and easy to me, by a manifest and powerful work of conversion, repentance, and faith upon his soul in the time of his sickness ; which administered much comfort to me, so that I sorrowed not for him as one without hope, who exercised great patience under his very great pain, soreness, and burning fever, whilst his flesh, marrow, and moisture consumed, and acted faith and hope very lively and constantly upon Christ in that word, “ And him that cometh to me, I will in no

wise cast out, " John 6. 37; very often expressing his former bondage and slavery to sin and satan which he bewailed; and acknowledged often God's free and rich grace in giving him Christ, and pardon, and salvation now at last, which he had neglected the offers and tenders of so often. Some combats he had, but after a manifestation of Christ to his soul, he died in faith and peace.

And albeit my natural affections caused me to weep often, and the sense of God's hand and rod upon me caused me to mourn very much in secret, yet the Almighty by his rod and staff did so comfort me, that I walked through this valley also of the shadow of death, without fear of evil; and was assisted, and enabled, to perform the work of my ministry in the congregation without any omission or interruption. And that very night my only son died, the Lord brought to my mind that scripture; "Feed thy people with thy rod," Micah vii. 14: which was made a seasonable, suitable, and powerful word, by the teachings of the Holy

Spirit unto my soul, in my solitary condition ; who thus administered food, yea and a feast also to my soul. By this rod of God I had served into my soul a dish of sour or bitter herbs, I mean sorrow for my sins ; but I fed also on the Paschal Lamb, in whose blood I saw all my sins washed away ; and the Spirit of God witnessed with my spirit, that I was a child of God, and one of those children with whom God will keep covenant, and not take his love from, though he visited my transgressions with the rod, and mine iniquities with stripes, Psal. lxxxix. 28—34 ; which scripture was then brought again with power to my heart. The next dish of spiritual food under this rod which God brought me, or sent me by his Spirit in his word to feed upon, was full of love ; then that holy scripture came to me, not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance ; “ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him,

and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 19, 20 : wherein he shewed me his face ; and I saw my Father's face in that glass of the gospel, " For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?" Heb. xii. 6, 7 ; which the Holy Spirit held forth to me by this rod, and shed abroad in my heart the love of the Father in his Son Jesus Christ. After this the next day God gave me a dish of spiritual fruits by this rod to feed upon, served up in that holy scripture, " No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby." After God had thus fed me, and feasted me several days and nights together with this rod, he very graciously pronounced his blessing upon me in these words ; " Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law," or

word, unto which I was helped heartily to say ‘ Amen, It is good for me that I have been afflicted,’ &c. After God had thus communed with me from his mercy-seat, and had instructed me, I experienced such divine loves, shinings, and perpetual sweetness, as Jonathan did when he tasted a little honey-dew on the end of the rod in his hand, and was enlightened and refreshed ; so that I was enlivened or revived, fed and feasted by the rod and word, even the bond of God’s everlasting covenant of free grace, and love.

About four or five months after the death of my son, his wife married a gentleman of 300l. per annum, and left me engaged to receive and pay all my son’s debts ; and to preserve his credit, and his wife’s, I borrowed 200l. for that purpose, and suffered the loss thereof, which necessitated me still to keep school. And I having a granddaughter with me three years before, she being nineteen years old, did take the charge of my household affairs, and of my boarders, who managed all things with so much dis-

cretion that my life was very comfortable, and I had great content. In September, 1672, my only daughter's husband went by her consent into the country, and left her.

Thus far was written with his own hand, and there we must be forced to break off, though abruptly; the remaining part of his life, written by himself as this was, being, (as Mr. Kiffin mentions in his preface,) unhappily lost; which, because it is impossible to be supplied by any hand so particularly as his own, must be done in general, by letting the christian reader know, that this holy man's life was all of a piece, and that he maintained his zeal, fidelity, and integrity, in the latter part of it as well as in the former, even to the end of it. He was not very long sick; not keeping his chamber above five weeks, nor his bed above ten days. All the time of his sickness he behaved himself with extraordinary patience, and resignation to the divine will, longing to be dissolved and to be with Christ—not so much to be freed

from pain and trouble, as from sinning, which he expressed to one near him, with a more than ordinary transport of joy. A little before his death he wrote the following epistle, which he left as his last legacy to the church.

MR. KNOLLYS'S
LAST LEGACY TO THE CHURCH.

Written a little before his Death.

To the Church whereof I am Pastor, Grace, Love and Peace, by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

HOLY Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, I not being able to preach any more unto you, do take liberty by writing to give you this as my last counsel; and I hope the whole church will seriously consider what I have written, as the last words of your very aged Pastor, whose departure, as I hope, is at hand.

First of all, I do humbly beseech my reverend and beloved brother Steed, for Christ's sake, that the fervent love to the church, and the watchful care over the particular members of it, expressed and published in his little epistle touching singing, may be revived; and also that the brotherly love of the ministering brethren, and likewise of all my beloved brethren who are helps in government, may be stirred up to help, to assist, to provoke the rest unto good works, Gal. iv. 18.

Now I do unfeignedly, and without vain boasting, commend many of you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for continuing in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer, (but as for the rest, who forsake the assembling of themselves with the church on the Lord's day, I commend them not,) especially not only in this time of liberty, but when it was a time of violent persecution, when I was shut up a year and four months, (blessed be God for prison-mercies,) in New Prison. And having mentioned that time of persecu-

tion, can I pass it by without commending the constant assembling of our brethren, and sisters all that time, every Lord's-day to worship God? And may I not with great comfort, commend the labour of love of our ministering brethren, in the work and doctrine of the gospel, without ceasing, (as you well know,) and among whom they still labour and faint not? And now some of our younger brethren begin to improve their gifts and talents for the glory of God, and the edification of the church, whom I desire may be encouraged.

Another thing very commendable in this church is, the charity which they have added to their brotherly kindness, 2 Pet. i. 7. It was great brotherly kindness which was manifested to the church, by those brethren who looked out our Meeting House, and prepared it for us as it now is; and unto this, many of our brethren and sisters have added their charity, in a free and very liberal collection and contribution, given into the Trustees of the fund: and I hope they will be ready to do the like again, when the like ne-

cessities call for it. Read I pray you the eighth and ninth chapters of the second Epistle unto the church of Corinth. ; all this and much more are the riches of grace, which God hath freely given by our Lord Jesus Christ unto this church, for his own glory.

Nevertheless, I must in love and faithfulness to your precious and gracious souls, holy and beloved, tell you of some things, not to shame you, (for I myself am found guilty as well as you, and more than some of you,) but to warn you, and to counsel you, as a father doth his children; and they are these.

First, That several of us are fallen in some degree from our first love, cooled in our spiritual affections to Jesus Christ, and to the saints. Must not you and I confess, that it is not with us now as it was in the day of our first espousals ? God the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit remember it, Jerem. ii. 1. 2 ; and we should remember from whence we are fallen, and should say, “ I will go and return to my first husband, for then was

it better with me than now," Hos. ii. 7:
Rev. ii. 4. 5.

Now the first part of my counsel, which I desire to take and receive from Christ and give unto you, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, who are convinced and have confessed it before the Lord on several days of fasting and prayer, is this—

First, I do counsel you to repent, Rev. ii. 5; and I must tell you, beloved, that our assembling once in four weeks, and spending four hours, from eleven to three, in praying and preaching as we have often done, is not such a fast as will make our voice to be heard on high, Isai. lviii. 3. 4. Several things are essentially necessary to evangelical repentance, that it may be acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ. Namely, godly sorrow, which worketh repentance never to be repented of, 2 Cor. vii. 9. 10. A broken, contrite spirit. Read these Scriptures, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," Psal. li. 17; "Be afflicted, and mourn, and

weep : let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up," James iv. 9. 10. " But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Isai. lxvi. 2. " For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isai. lvii. 15. " And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon," Zech. xii. 10. 11. Alas, where are our tears of godly sorrow, our broken hearts, and our afflicted souls? Reform-

ation after humiliation? “ Repent and do thy first works ” Rev. ii. 5. O holy brethren, let us do so, let you and I beg grace, that we may both mourn and turn from all our sins to the Lord, with all our hearts.

We have cause to repent of our formality and Laodicean lukewarmness, especially for want of zeal for the house of God, Psal. lxix. 9; “ For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” “ As many as I love I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore and repent,” Rev. iii. 19; John ii. 17.

Secondly, I counsel you to be zealous; zeal is a fervent and constant affection of a gracious soul in a good thing, managed with discretion, Gal. iv. 18. If our zeal be not fixed upon a right object, and good matter, it may be hot and great, but it cannot be good. Compare the zeal of Paul, Phill. iii. 6; with the zeal of Epaphras, Col. iv. 12. 13.

To guide our zeal aright, two things especially ought to accompany it.

First, The light of knowledge; “ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For

I hear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Read the words again and again, and as often as you read this paper. Many professors of the law then were very zealous of establishing their own legal righteousness ; and many professors of the gospel now, are as zealous to establish their own legal righteousness, and not Christ's. Oh ! say some, if I could pray so, mourn so as others do ; if I were so holy and so humble, &c. then I would believe. Oh ! say others, if I could get power over my corruptions, and strength against satan's temptations, and victory over the allurements of this present evil world, then I would believe ; but I have a heart so full of vile affections, vain thoughts, and doubts, that I cannot believe. Consider, are praying, mourning, humbling our souls, gospel duties ? Even so is believing a gospel duty, which God commands ; " And this is his commandment,

that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" 1 John iii. 23; and he threatens to damn those that hear the gospel preached, and will not believe, Mark xvi. 16.

Secondly, The aim and end of our zeal must always be the glory of God, and guided as I said by discretion, wise as well as warm; greatest zeal in greatest matters, and lesser zeal in lesser matters. Compare, Gal. v. 11. 13; with 1 Cor xi. 13—16; and Prov xix. 11.

My counsel also is, and I humbly beseech our honoured and beloved Elder, and entreat our ministering brethren who are helps in government, to join together to set in order these things. I mean no other things than those holy administrations which Christ, his Apostles, and Disciples, practised in the beginning. Search these scriptures, 1 Pet. ii. 21; Phill. iii. 17; Luke xiv. 16--22; Acts xxviii. 23. 24. 28—31: 1 Cor. xiv. 13. 23. 24. 25. 29; 1 Tim. iv. 13; Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 27; Rev. i. 3. Consider, holy brethren, that as reading and expounding are two different administrations, so are prophesying and preaching, yet both gospel ordinances, Rom. xii. 6. 7.

Fourthly, and lastly, my counsel to the church is, that you will look out a Minister of Jesus Christ, whom he hath in some competent measure qualified with such ministerial gifts and graces, as may make him worthy of so great honour as is due to a Pastor, and Elder of the church of God; yea, of double honour, 1 Tim. v. 17; both of maintenance and obedience, Heb. xiii. 17.

And now my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, I commit you all to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified. So I remain, while in this tabernacle,

Your Brother in the Lord,

HANSERD KNOLLYS.

Just published, Price Threepence,

A

FEW WORDS

TO

MASTER EDWARDS,

IN ANSWER TO

HIS SECOND PART OF THE GANGRENA:

ALSO,

TO THE NAMELESS AUTHOR OF A BOOK

CALLED

AN AFTER-RECKONING

WITH

MASTER SALTMARSH.

BY JOHN SALTMARSH,

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PUBLISHED BY E. HUNTINGTON, HIGH-STREET,
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THE
PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM
OF
HEAVEN EXPOUNDED;

OR,

AN EXPOSITION OF THE FIRST

THIRTEEN VERSES OF

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW;

BY HANSERD KNOLLYS.

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them. *Matt. xiii. 14.*

Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to others in parables. *Luke viii. 10.*

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old. *Psalms lxxviii. 2.*

I will incline mine ear to a parable. *Psalms xlix. 4.*

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TO THE READER.

ART thou a Professor? I intreat thee do not rest in the form of godliness without the power thereof; that undid the foolish virgins to eternity. It is a vain thing for any person to seem to be religious, and be not so in truth. — The fig tree that had leaves was cursed by Christ, because it bare no fruit; and it suddenly withered.

Art thou a Believer? Ponder then what is propounded in this little treatise; and search the scriptures, whether what is therein affirmed be so, or not. I know but in part, yet am I willing to impart my knowledge for thy edification. And if any truth here asserted, shall profit thy understanding, my earnest request to thee is, that thou wilt give all the glory to God.

Art thou a profane Person, and one that dost scoff at the doctrine of the coming of Christ? Then know, that yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry; but if, in the mean time, thou die in thy sins, thou wilt be damned to eternity. Be serious therefore in reading this little book, it may be God will make it a blessing to thy soul, and then I have my end.

Thy soul's friend,

HANSERD KNOLLYS.

THE
PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM
OF
HEAVEN EXPOUNDED.

MATTHEW XXV. 1—13.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise and five were foolish.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

But the wise answered, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.

THE Lord Jesus Christ being asked by his disciples, what shall be the sign of his coming, Matt. xxiv. 3; answered and said, "Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold." "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." So the apostle testifieth also, 2 Tim. iii. 1; "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." But saith our Saviour, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, then shall appear," not the person, but, "the sign of the son of man in heaven: and they shall see the son

of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins."

These thirteen verses contain a parable, and the application of it, to Christ's disciples. In the parable are three general parts, viz. First, parabolæ, *πρίτασις* from verse 1 to 5. Second, *σπίτασις*, verse 6 to 9. And Third, *καταποφνή* from verse 10 to 13. And the exhortation or application of the parable in verse 13.

In the *πρίτασις* of the parable observe, 1, the time, "Then," that is when the kingdom of God, and coming of Christ in power and great glory is at hand, or near, even at the door. 2, The subject or matter that our saviour spake of, "The kingdom of heaven." 3, The resemblance thereof, "Likened unto ten virgins;" who are described in this first verse by their preparation, "They took their lamps;" and by their action, "They went out to meet the bridegroom."

“ Then shall the kingdom of heaven,” &c. By the kingdom of heaven, in some places of the holy scripture, we are to understand the kingdom of glory; “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” In other places of scripture, by the kingdom of heaven, we are to understand the spiritual kingdom of grace in the hearts of sanctified believers; “ The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed,” Matt. xiii. 31. By the kingdom of heaven, in some other places of scripture, we are to understand the mystical kingdom of the church of Christ, under the gospel; “ Upon this rock,” that rock is Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4; “ I will build my church. And I will give unto thee, the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

By the kingdom of heaven, in this verse, we may not understand the celestial kingdom of glory, for there are no foolish virgins in that heaven; nor the spiritual kingdom of grace, which is the kingdom of God within us, Luke xvii. 21: but the mystical

kingdom of the church of God under the gospel, wherein there are both wise and foolish virgins.

1. Meditation. Every true, visible, constituted church of Christ, under the gospel, did in the apostles' days, and shall in the latter days, bear some resemblance unto the kingdom of heaven. For confirmation of this doctrine, read the following scriptures :
 " The glory of the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."
 " I will glorify the house of my glory."
 " And I will make the place of my feet glorious." " I will make thee an eternal excellency." " The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."
 " I the Lord will hasten it in his time;" that is, in Christ's day. Isai. lx.

In the explication of this point, two things are to be enquired into. 1, What is a true, visible, constituted church of Christ, under the gospel. 2, Wherein the church of God on earth bears proportion with, and resemblance unto, the kingdom of heaven.

Touching the first particular. A true, visible, constituted church of Christ under the gospel, is a congregation of saints, 1 Cor. i. 2; called out of the world, Rom. i. 7; separated from idolaters' and idols' temples, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17; from the unbelieving Jews, and their synagogues, and all legal observations of holy-days, sabbath days, and mosaical rites, ceremonies, and shadows, Acts xix. 9; Col. ii. 16, 17; and assembled together in one place, 1 Cor. xiv. 23; on the Lord's day, the first day of the week, Acts xx. 7; to worship God, visibly by the spirit, and in the truth, John iv. 23, 24; in the holy ordinances of God, 1 Cor. xi. 2; according to the faith and order of the gospel, Col. ii. 5.

Touching the second particular to be enquired into, it consists of two parts. 1, The church is called a kingdom. 2, The church is called the kingdom of heaven. The church is compared to a kingdom; because, 1. Christ the head of the church, is the king of saints, Rev. xv. 3; and the king of Zion, Psal. ii. 6. "Let the children of Zion,"

the congregation of saints, “ be joyful in their king,” Psal. cxlix. 1, 2.

2. The church of God is Christ’s throne, Jer. xvii. 12; “ A glorious high throne from the beginning,” of his mystical kingdom, “ is the place of our sanctuary.” “ A throne was set in heaven,” the church, “ and one sat on the throne,” namely Christ. “ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats,” or thrones; “ and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders,” the spiritual priests of God, “ sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold,” Rev. iv. 2, 4.

3. Christ, the king of his church, is their lawgiver, Isai. xxxiii. 22. The Lord is our statute-maker; and the bible is his statute-book, wherein are published all the laws of God’s house, Ezek. xliii. 10, 11; according to which laws the church of saints are to be governed by their elders, whom Christ hath set over them, to rule and govern them, Heb. xiii. 7, 17; according to the laws of his house.

The church is compared to the kingdom of heaven, 1. With respect unto the gracious and glorious presence of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the church. God dwelleth in Zion, Psal. ix. 11; Joel iii. 21; for it is his rest, Psal. cxxxii. 14. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, Rev. ii. 1. God's presence makes heaven to be heaven; and that makes a heaven on earth, a heaven in the heart, and a heaven in the congregations of saints.

2. With respect unto the spiritual glory of the church of God in the latter days, Isai. lx. 13. The beauties of holiness, Psal. cx. 3: makes Zion the perfection of beauty, Psal. l. 2. The temple was filled with the glory of God, Ezek. xliii. 5; and xliv. 4: "And the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." The house of the Lord is the church of the living God, 1 Tim. iii. 15. "And the temple was filled

with smoke from the glory of God," Rev. xv. 8.

3. With respect unto the great company and number of saints in the assemblies, and churches of Christ, (called the churches of saints, 1 Cor. xiv. 33;) among whom, and in whose assemblies, are the holy angels, because of whose presence the women were to be veiled, 1 Cor. xi. 10. This will be more evident in the last days, when the holy city, the new Jerusalēm, shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, Rev. xxi. 1—3. And when we are come to mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 22—24; then will the church of God on earth bear some greater proportion with, and resemblance unto, the kingdom of heaven.

“ Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” Ten is a mystical number, as Dan. vii. 7, 20, 24; ten

horns, "Ten thousands of saints," Jude xiv. Ten days, "Rev. ii. 10; and so ten virgins; that is, a definite number for an indefinite. By virgins, we are to understand gospel professors, and church members. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2; who have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Christ. Some are foolish virgins, formal professors, denying the power of godliness, only seeming to be religious, James i. 26; who, "After they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are again entangled therein, and overcome; whose latter end is worse than their beginning." 2 Pet. ii. 20.

Others who are wise virgins, having not only the form but the power of godliness also, and being partakers of the divine nature, have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Pet. i. 4. These, being not defiled with spiritual whoredoms, do follow Christ wheresoever he goes. "These

are they which are not defiled with women," Rev. xiv. 4; neither the great whore of Rome, Mystery, Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, Rev. xvii. 5; nor the daughters of that whore, false churches, whose mother mystical Babylon is; though some of those daughters be, (as Nineveh was called, Nahum iii. 4;) well-favoured harlots, because of the multitude of their spiritual whoredoms.

2. Meditation. The churches of saints in the last days, shall be reformed and restored unto a virgin state of primitive purity, and spiritual glory, as in the apostles' days.

For the confirmation of this doctrine, read and consider these scriptures. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, Isai. lx. 2—6. "He that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy," &c. Isai. lx. 13, 17, 21. "I will glorify the house of my glory, and I will makethe place of my feet glorious," Isai.

lxv. 17, 18, 19, 25. “ For behold I create new heavens, and a new earth,” &c. Rev. xx. 1—5. “ Behold, I make all things new,” 2 Pet. iii. 13, 14. Rev. xiv. 1—5. “ These are they that follow the lamb;—for they are virgins.”

In the explication of this point we are to consider two particulars.

1. What reformation will be in the churches of saints in the last days.

2. What things shall be restored then, which are or have been wanting in the churches of saints, since the apostles’ days.

Touching the first particular. 1. Professors of the gospel, and members of churches, will be much reformed from many corruptions, in their judgments, and conversations. The apostles tell us, and foretold the churches, that in the latter days some professors would be corrupted in their judgments; compare 1 Tim. iv. 1—3; with 2 Pet. ii. 1—3. “ And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” And in the last days, other professors would be cor-

rupted in their conversations; 2 Tim. iii. 1—5; covetous, proud, promise, and covenant-breakers, “Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:” and are not too, too many members of churches, who seem to be religious, very much corrupted in their judgments, and some also in their conversations? But the days are coming when there shall be a great reformation in both these respects.

For God will turn to the people a pure language. “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth,” Zeph. iii. 9, 13; and those virgin professors that follow the Lamb, shall be redeemed from the earth, and from men. “And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God,” Rev. xiv. 4, 5.

2. The discipline and government of the churches will be very much reformed in the last days, for then Christ the Lord will “reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem,

and before his ancients gloriously," Isai. xxiv. 23; "from henceforth even for ever," Micah iv. 6, 7. The churches of saints shall be ruled and governed by the holy, righteous, and good laws of the Lord Jesus Christ, Isai. xxxiii. 22; who is the Son over the house of God, Heb. iii. 1, 6. "Shew them all the laws of the house, and let them measure the pattern," &c. Ezek. xliii. 10, 11. "The government shall be upon his shoulder." Christ is the legislator, the lawgiver; the bible is his, and his churches statute-book; and all the churches, ministers, and saints of God are to be governed by his royal law of liberty, in obeying and keeping whereof, there is a blessing promised, James i. 25.

Touching the second particular. 1. The ministry of the gospel will be restored in the latter days. "I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit shall be restored in the last days, Joel ii. 21, 23, 28,

29, 30, 31. "The Lord will do great things." "Be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God," &c. "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh," &c. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh," &c. Acts ii. 17, 18. This is that which God hath promised, and will again perform.

3. The ordinances of God will be restored to his churches in the latter days. Antichrist hath made void the commandments of God by the traditions of men, as the scribes and pharisees did, Mark vii. 6, 7, 9; and he hath changed the ordinances of Christ, and brought in the ordinances of men; "Why are ye subject to ordinances," or traditions; "after the commandments and doctrines of men? which is will-worship," Col. ii. 20, 22, 23; and vain worship. "But in vain do they worship me." The ordinances of God, (which have been corrupted by men's inventions, and superstitions,) shall be restored to their primitive purity and first institutions. - Read Jer.

xxxii. 38; xxx. 20; and compare it with Zeph. iii. 9. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language," or a clean lip; "that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one" shoulder or "consent." "In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one;" that is, in the latter day, Christ and his saints shall be one kingdom; and his way and worship but one in all the earth.

"Which took their lamps." The virgin professors of the gospel, and worshippers of God in the churches of Christ, have lamps; that is, the presence of God in his worship, and ordinances. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name," saith Christ, "there am I in the midst of them." So God manifested his presence with Abraham, when he was offering a sacrifice to the Lord. "Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, passed between those pieces; and the Lord made a covenant with Abraham." Read Exod. xix. 18; also Isai. iv. 5; Rev. xv. 8. God appointed seven lamps to be lighted and supplied with

sweet oil of olives, both in his wilderness-tabernacle, *Exod. xxv. 37*; and in his Canaan-temple, *2 Chron. iv. 20, 21*; that they might burn continually before the Lord, which typed forth the seven spirits of God. “And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God;” that is, the variety and abundance of the gifts, and fruits of the Holy eternal Spirit. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit;” and so there are divers, and many fruits of the Spirit, *Gal. v. 22, 23*.

These ten virgins having received their lamps, to wit, a commandment from the Lord, (“For the commandment is a lamp,” *Prov. vi. 23*;) to worship him by the Spirit, in truth; and spiritual gifts and grace to perform the gospel-instituted ordinances of Christ, according to the holy will of God, revealed in his written word: for his word is a lamp unto the feet of his saints, and a light unto their paths, *Psal. cxix. 105*.

3. Meditation. The virgin professors of the gospel, and worshippers of God in the

churches of saints, shall have gospel light and spiritual gifts in the latter days, to worship God in the order and ordinances of the gospel, according to the written word of God.

First. Virgin professors shall have gospel light in the latter days to worship God aright. The written word of God, through the teachings of the Holy Spirit; to wit, the commands of Christ, and the examples of his apostles, churches, and saints approved by Christ, recorded in the holy scriptures of truth, will be a lamp and a light unto them, 1 Cor. xi. 1, 2; Phill. iii. 16, 17; "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And the gentiles," or heathen nations, "shall come to thy light, &c."

Secondly. Virgin professors in the churches of Christ, in the latter days, shall have spiritual gifts, qualifying and enabling them to worship God by the Spirit, and in the truth; in the order and ordinances of the gospel. "And it shall come to pass," saith God, "in the last days, I will pour

out my Spirit upon all flesh." "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." As in the days of the apostles, so shall it be in the last days, Joel ii. 21, 28, 29; more abundantly poured forth.

"And went forth to meet the bridegroom." This bridegroom is the Lord Jesus Christ; "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom;" that is, Jesus Christ, to whom his churches, and saints are espoused, 2 Cor. xi. 2; whom Christ hath betrothed to himself in loving-kindness, and faithfulness for ever, Hosea ii. 19, 20: They are his sister, and his spouse, Cant. iv. 10; the Lamb's wife, Rev. xix. 7, 8. And he is the bridegroom; "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

To meet the bridegroom, doth imply two things. First, that the virgins did know and believe that Christ was coming. "O worship the Lord, in the beauty of holiness. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, and rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh, &c." Had not the

foolish virgins known and believed that Christ would come, yea, and that he was coming, they would not have gone out to meet him; but would rather have scoffed at his coming, when the wise virgins had spoken of it, as those scoffers will do. “There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?”

Secondly, That all the virgins did know and believe, that the coming of the spiritual bridegroom, Christ Jesus, was near; and that he would come quickly, or shortly. The bridegroom’s coming was even at the door, therefore they went out to meet him; “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith.” The virgins believed this, and went out to meet the bridegroom; and they had scripture ground to believe this, because God had revealed it in his written word: “Behold I come quickly. He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen.” Rev. xxii. 12, 20.

They went out to meet the bridegroom; that is, the virgin professors in the churches of saints in the latter days, knowing and believing the coming of Christ the bridegroom, will go out from their nearest and dearest relations, their great possessions. They will forsake father and mother, wife and children, that will not go out with them to meet the bridegroom; and will follow him wheresoever he goes, as his disciples did, Matt. xix. 27; so will the virgins do, Rev. xiv. 1, 4; and it is the duty of all Christ's disciples so to do, Luke xiv. 26, 27; Matt. x. 37, 39; and they that forsake all their relations, estates, lands, houses, goods, and all, for Christ, shall not lose by so doing, Luke xviii. 28, 30; Mark x. 28, 30. "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me."

4. Meditation. That such gospel light will be revealed to virgin professors in the latter days; and such anointing of the Spirit will be poured out upon them, as will cause them, and make them willing to

sell all, lose all, and forsake all, and go out to meet the bridegroom.

1. Gospel light, touching the kingdom and coming of the spiritual bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, will be revealed in the latter days. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, and then shall the end come." "It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light," Zech. xiv. 6. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." "The Lord God giveth them light. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads; and they shall reign for ever and ever:" which must shortly be accomplished; "Behold I come quickly."

2. The anointings of the Spirit, the gifts and powerful operations of the Spirit, will be upon virgin professors in the latter days, Joel ii. 28, 29; Isai. xliii. 3, 5, 6; 32, 15, 17. The fathers, the young men, and the little children, shall have the unction of the holy one, 1 John ii. 13, 14, 20, 27; then it

will be with virgin professors as it was in the apostles' days. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God. All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 4, 11.

3. This gospel light, anointing, and operation of the Holy Spirit upon virgin professors in the last days, will engage them, and make them willing, to go out to meet the bridegroom. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness." "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." He will pour his Spirit upon them, Ezek. xxxix. 29; and they shall obey his voice. "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;" and they went out to meet the bridegroom.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

In this parable, virgin professors in the churches of saints, are variously distinguished by Christ; viz. five of them are wise, and five are foolish. 1. The foolish took no oil with them, but what was in their lamps. 2. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 3. The lamps of the wise virgins, being trimmed and supplied with oil in their vessels, continued burning; the lamps of the foolish virgins, being trimmed but not supplied with oil, went out. 4. The wise virgins, being ready, went in with the bridegroom to the marriage; but the foolish virgins, not being prepared, were shut out.

This verse contains the first distinction of virgin professors; “Five were wise, and five were foolish.” Five is a definite number put for an indefinite, and thereby a small number is here put for a greater, and a few for a very many. The five foolish virgins include all sorts of gospel professors, who having a form of godliness, are destitute of the power thereof, 2 Tim. iii. 5; and the five

wise virgins comprehend all sorts of worshippers of God, that make not only a profession of Christ, but have also possession of Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, Ephes. iii. 17; both which particulars will plainly appear in the exposition, and handling of the third and fourth verses.

Meditation. There are some wise, and many foolish virgins.

The Holy Spirit hath given many distinguishing characters in the scripture of truth, between these wise and foolish virgins; whereof some in this parable, which I have already mentioned in general, and shall afterwards shew particularly. The scripture distinctions between sanctified believers and hypocrites; between them that only seem to be religious, and them that are sincerely so, in deed and truth; between those that are in Christ, having an everlasting and inseparable union with him, and those that are without Christ, who make a profession of Christ, but have not possession of Christ in their hearts: I say all these scripture distinctions are applica-

ble, and may be accommodated unto wise and foolish professors. But more especially that distinction which the Holy Spirit makes between them that have the form, and them that have the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 1, 5; which Christ in this parable doth metaphorically express by the foolish virgins, who took their lamps, but took no oil with them; and the wise virgins, who took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

“ They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.”

By lamps we are to understand temple light, viz. divine knowledge and spiritual gifts; as hath been proved in the exposition of the first verse; whereby our Saviour did mystically and metaphorically shew, that the foolish virgins had a form of godliness.

By oil in their lamps is meant that shining, outward profession of Christ, which went out at last; “ Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” The light of the knowledge of Christ and of the prophecies, and of the mysteries of his kingdom and

coming, which shined in the profession they made, and in the witness and testimony that they had borne for Christ against antichrist, withered away and died. All their common gifts and graces faded and failed, and they all fell away like the stony ground hearers, "Who for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away," Luke viii. 13.

By oil in the wise virgins' vessels, we are to understand Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and the sanctifying knowledge of Christ, and the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in their hearts and in their souls; for their souls are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, Rom. ix. 23, 24. Their mystical and spiritual oil is the unction of the holy One, which they have received, 1 John ii. 20, 27; whereby our Saviour did figuratively and mystically shew, that the wise virgins had the power of godliness. And in this part of the parable of the kingdom of heaven, Christ declares and testifies, that they are foolish virgins who rest satisfied, and content themselves with the form

of godliness without the power thereof; who have lamps but no oil.

2. That they are wise virgins who have both lamps and oil in their vessels, to wit, Christ, his Spirit and his grace in their hearts; having both the form and power of godliness.

Meditation. It is not the lamp-light of profession, and the form of godliness; but the oil of grace, and sanctification, even the power of godliness in heart and life, that will make a satisfactory distinction between wise and foolish virgin professors in the last days.

Though this be very clear and plain by what hath been already said, in this exposition; yet because I do think it may be profitable, first, for the conviction of some formal professors, who are foolish virgins; especially sinners in Sion, unconverted church members; secondly, for the edification and establishment of sanctified believers in the visible constituted churches of Christ, especially weak christians; I am

therefore willing, through divine assistance, to treat more largely of the form and power of godliness, therein to demonstrate the wisdom and folly of virgin professors, than I shall do of some other things held forth in this parable, and which I judge less necessary to enlarge upon.

That which I shall offer to consideration touching the form and power of godliness, doth consist in these three following propositions.

1. There is the form of godliness and the power of godliness. All the virgins had burning and shining lamps, and some of them had oil in their vessels with their lamps.

2. The form of godliness may be where the power of godliness is not. The foolish virgins took their lamps, but took no oil with them, to wit, in their vessels; that is, they had the form of godliness in their profession, but they wanted the power of godliness in their hearts and conversation.

3. That some virgin professors in the churches of saints, having the form of god-

liness, will deny the power thereof in the last days; of whom the apostle spake expressly and foretold, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

Touching the first proposition, *μόρφωσις*, signifies any form, or kind of worship, or godliness; and having no article joined with it, it doth not signify this, that, or the form of godliness properly, or strictly; but indefinitely, any form, and every form of godliness, and consequently the form of godliness.

There are divers forms of religion wherein men worship and serve God, according to the different apprehensions and persuasions of persons professing godliness; whereof some, yea several, are of man's devising; Matt. xv. 8, 9, compared with Col. ii. 20, 22, 23. But there is a form of godliness, which is of God's institution under the gospel, wherein men ought to worship God in spirit and truth, John iv. 23, 24, according to his own appointments.

The form of godliness, of God's own appointment, consists in the external religious performance of all those evangelical duties,

which he hath commanded us in his holy word, Ezek. xliii. 10, 11; according as he hath commanded, wherein persons seem to be religious and godly. Formal professors do perform those religious duties, 1. From a principle of self, which is the common and highest principle that formal professors and hypocrites are acted by, in the worship of God. They pray for themselves, fast and mourn for themselves, and live to themselves, Zech. vii. 4—6. Self-love, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-dependence, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, and self-salvation, is the frame and end of a formal professor. Self is the spring and main principle of all he doth in his religion; “Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself,” Hos. x. 1.

2. From a principle of tradition which they have received from their fathers, by custom and education; so did the apostle Paul worship God before his conversion. “I profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my

fathers." Thus many formal professors now worship God after the traditions and customs of their fathers and teachers, as the scribes and pharisees did, whom Christ reprehended; "Ye hold the tradition of men. In vain do they worship me; making the word and commandment of God of none effect through your tradition." "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women kneed their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger." "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil," Jer. xliv. 16, 17.

3. From a principle of fear ; legal fear, to wit, the fear of hell, wrath or curse, &c. causeth many professors to pray, hear sermons, perform holy duties, and to partake of God's ordinances. Also, a servile fear of the anger and displeasure of men, causeth many children and servants to worship God formally ; and they seem to be religious because they are afraid to anger and displease their godly parents, masters, or some other godly relations. Their fear of God is taught by the commandments of men, Isa. xxix. 13 ; and thereby they are made conformable unto the external parts of God's worship, and attain unto a form of godliness, yet are without the power thereof.

4. From a principle of superstition many are like the idolaters of Athens, who worshipped the unknown God, and were very superstitious in their will-worship of God. The zeal and superstition of the scribes and pharisees made them strictly formal in their legal, ceremonial worship of God ; hence the pharisee boasted in the temple, " I fast twice in the week, I give alms of all that

I possess." Many of the Jews being zealous in their devotion, but wanting knowledge, Rom. x. 2; worshipped God according to the superstitious inventions of men; "Which things," saith the apostle, "have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility;" and do make formal professors subject to ordinances of God, after the commandments and doctrines of men.

This may suffice to evince and demonstrate, that there is a form of godliness; and indeed none can externally worship God without some form of godliness, wherein persons do seem to be religious, and may seem to be like God in holiness and righteousness, both in worship and conversation in some measure.

As there is the form of godliness, so there is the power of godliness. The power of godliness consists, 1. In the truth of grace; 2. In the lively acts and exercise of grace; And, 3. In the growth and perfection of grace.

The power of godliness consists, first, in the truth of grace. In whatsoever form of

religion any professors worship God, yea, though that external form be ordained of God, instituted by Jesus Christ, and practised by the apostles, churches and saints; yet for all this, without the truth of grace, they are void of the power of godliness. The primitive saints did not only receive the ordinances, but the truth of grace also by the ministry of the apostles, in the dispensation of the gospel; and knew the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 4—8.

True grace is the incorruptible seed of the new birth, 1 Pet. i. 23; and of the kingdom of God in the hearts of believers, Matt. xiii. 31, 32; which kingdom of God within us, Luke xvii. 21; is not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, 1 Thess. i. 4, 5; 1 Cor. 4, 20.

Now the power of godliness doth demonstrate itself by true, saving, sanctifying grace. 1. In denying all ungodliness. 2. In living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present, evil world, Titus ii. 11, 12; this is the constant frame of a believer's

heart. He would not sin, he hates all sin, he would be holy, he loves holiness, and desires to be more holy, Rom. vii. 15—22.

Secondly, The power of godliness doth consist in the lively acts and exercise of grace ; as the form of godliness appears in the frequent exercise of holy duties, so doth the power of godliness appear in the lively acts and exercise of holy graces, to wit, in the life and lively work of faith, 2 Thess. i. 11, 12 ; also in the labour of fervent love, 1 Pet. i. 22 ; bearing all things, enduring all things, with all brotherly kindness, Heb. vi. 10. Likewise in the constant exercise of patience, humility, meekness and self-denial, taking up the cross daily, bearing it patiently, following the steps of Christ, who humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross ; yea, and he endured the cross. Now believers who have the power of godliness, are armed with the same mind, 1 Pet. iv. 1 ; and desire to be like minded to Christ, Phill. ii. 5, 8. They suffer patiently, knowing that tribulation, which is the trial of their faith, worketh

patience, and are desirous that patience may have her perfect work, James i. 2—4.

Thirdly, The power of godliness doth consist in the growth and perfection of grace; grace is of a growing nature, 2 Pet. iii. 18. For, 1. It grows in its root, which is Jesus Christ, Col. ii. 6, 7; as the good seed that is sown in good ground, and brings forth fruit, Luke viii. 8, 15. The reason why meer formal professors fall away, is, because they are not rooted nor grafted into Christ, Luke viii. 13; and the reason why those believers that are ingrafted into Christ, grow as cedars in Lebanon, as a green olive tree in the house of the Lord, and bring forth fruit as the vine, is, because they are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3; which take root downward into Christ, and so bring forth fruit upward, by that sap and nourishment which they receive from that spiritual root; to wit, those divine influences of the spirit of grace that they are made partakers of, by being ingrafted and rooted into Christ. This growth in grace is very secret, hidden, not seen

nor always discerned; like the growth of corn under ground, or of trees in winter, or of the child in the womb; yet it doth afterward appear, and is visible.

2. Grace grows in its lively acts and exercise. As a child after its natural birth, grows in all parts and members of the body, so a child of God being regenerated and born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, doth grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, by adding one grace to another; unto faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5—11. This growth in grace demonstrates the power of godliness; by this spiritual growth in grace, the weak in faith, Rom. xiv. 1; become strong in faith, 1 John ii. 14; and little faith becomes great faith: like the grain of mustard seed, that becomes a great tree, and very fruitful; whereunto Christ likened the kingdom of his grace within us, Matt. xiii. 31, 32; Luke xvii. 21.

3. Grace grows in its fruits unto perfection, and hereby is the power of godliness

demonstrated, to wit, in bringing forth much fruit, John xv. 5, 8; viz. the fruits of the Holy Spirit, Gal. v. 22, 23: which are the fruits of holiness and righteousness unto eternal life, Rom. vi. 22. Thus fruitful were the saints in the church of the Thessalonians, 2 Thess. i. 3. The apostle Paul exhorted the primitive saints to perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1: and the apostle Peter exhorted the called ones of God to be holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; because he knew that the power of godliness consisted in the life of holiness and righteousness, and is demonstrated in a holy conversation.

Thus it appears, that there is the form of godliness and the power of godliness, which is the first proposition. The second proposition is this,

That the form of godliness may be where the power of godliness is not.

Simon Magus seemed to be religious, he believed and was baptized, and took up the form of godliness; but for all this formality he had not the power of godliness, for he

was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and his heart was not right with God, Acts viii. 12, 21.

Ananias and Sapphira his wife, were both professors, and church members; they had taken upon them the name of Christ, and the form of godliness, seemed to be very charitable, and pretended much brotherly love to the poor saints, for they sold a possession, and gave a part of the price thereof unto the poor, Acts v. 1, 2: and yet they were void of the power of godliness.

Professors that are proud, covetous, carnal, covenant breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, &c.; many of them have a form of godliness, but they have not the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 2—5.

When professors and church members are generally formal in the performance of the duties of religion, very perfunctory and superficial in the worship of God; or lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, very indifferent whether they observe the Lord's-day or

another day, or no day at all to the Lord; so whether they hear the word preached, pray in their families or in their closets, or pray not at all; whether they come to the Lord's table or stay away, it argues they are so far from having the power of godliness, that they can scarcely be said to have the form of godliness.

Again, when professors and members of churches are very frequent and constant in assembling themselves together to worship God; very zealous and precise in the external part of the worship of God, and seem to be very conscientious and scrupulous in such things as appertain to the form of godliness: asserting and contending that all things ought to be exactly done in the church of God, according to the rule of the written word of God, and yet walk very disorderly at home; are heady and unruly in their own houses; set no rules nor bounds to their obstinate and perverse wills, to their inordinate and vile affections, to their worldly and covetous hearts; who seem to be religious, yet bridle not their tongues,

but deceive their own hearts ; their religion is vain, James i. 26. These professors have a form of godliness, but they want the power thereof.

Thus it appears that the form of godliness may be where the power of godliness is not. Professors may have leaves without fruit, as the fig-tree had ; lamps, and lighted, but no oil in their vessels, like the foolish virgins ; seem very religious in the congregation of saints, and be very irreligious in their conversation among sinners.

The reasons why professors rest in, and hold up, a form of godliness without the power thereof, are these. 1. Because they would have a name to live, though they be dead, Rev. iii. 1. They are very desirous to have a name in the house of God, to be accounted religious, and to be numbered among the saints, therefore they take up a form of godliness, and rest therein.

Those foolish professors, Matt. xxv. 1, 2, had gotten a name among the wise, and were called virgins ; they seemed to be religious ; they had lamps of gospel profes-

sion, and the form of godliness, wherewith they were satisfied, and therein they rested securely till the bridegroom came; and then it appeared they wanted oil, that is, the truth of grace, and power of godliness; for want whereof they were excluded and rejected by Jesus Christ.

2. Because a form of godliness will compose with a spirit of worldliness, earthly-mindedness, covetousness, pride, uncleanness, drunkenness; so that these lusts be but secretly committed. A professor and church member may be a self-lover and a lover of pleasures, a covenant or promise breaker, and yet have, and hold up, a form of godliness without the power thereof.

3. Because professors and church members may avoid troubles and persecutions, whilst they enjoy sabbaths, sermons, and ordinances, in an external form of public worship; whereas the power of godliness will expose them to suffer persecution, 2 Tim. iii. 12: so that the form of godliness may be where the power is not. This is

the second proposition. There is a third proposition, viz.

That some professors and church members, having, and holding up, the form of godliness, deny the power thereof.

Professors they must be, and church members they may be, that have, and hold up, the form of godliness, and seem to be very devout and religious in the worship of God, and yet some of them deny the power of godliness. We have shewed in the handling of the first proposition, wherein the form of godliness, and wherein the power of godliness doth consist, and have treated briefly both of the form and power of godliness. Now it remains, that in handling this third proposition, we shew, 1. What it is to deny the power of godliness.

2. The reasons why they deny the power of godliness.

To deny the power of godliness is, 1. To have an aversion against it in their affections, not to love and affect the power of godliness; which aversion against the

power of godliness, doth arise, and spring from that cursed and sinful enmity in their carnal minds against God. “The carnal mind is enmity against God;” and therefore carnal professors do not love nor like godliness in the truth and power of it, though they may be found in the form and profession thereof. ‘O,’ saith a formal professor in his heart, ‘I do not love this preciseness; this is to be righteous overmuch. I like not those that are so strict, so zealous, and so scrupulously conscientious. What necessity is there to deny myself, my liberty, my lawful recreation, content and delight, in things indifferent? Must my liberty therein be judged by another brother’s or sister’s conscience?’ He loves not, he likes not this; it crosseth his interest in the world; or it is contrary unto some of his beloved and indulged lusts to be so zealous, so religious, so conscientious as the power of godliness requireth, and would engage him to be; therefore he is averse from it, and so may be said to deny it.

To deny the power of godliness, is, 2. To refuse all the offers of Christ and grace, which God makes them in the ministry and administration of the gospel by his Holy Spirit, Isai. liii. 1—3. “ But ye denied the Holy One,” Acts iii. 13, 14; that is, they refused Christ, and would not have him to be their Saviour, King, Priest, and Prophet, saying, “ We will not have this man to reign over us.” Formal professors know not the worth of Christ, they are not sensible of their want of grace, therefore they slight, neglect, and refuse the offers of grace. They are willing to seem religious, but as for the truth of grace and power of godliness, they regard it not. They like Christ as a Saviour, but refuse him as a Sovereign; though they would be saved, they care not to be sanctified: they refuse to enter in at the strait gate of grace, and to walk in the narrow way of holiness; and yet they would go to heaven, and to that end cry, Lord, Lord. They pray and prophesy in Christ’s name; they worship God,

seem to be very religious, and partake of all God's holy ordinances, having a form of godliness; but yet they deny the power of godliness, by refusing the offers of Christ and grace, in the gospel and ordinances of God.

To deny the power of godliness, is, 3. To live in the practice of known sins, secretly indulging and allowing them; "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him."

When professors' lives are loose, carnal, worldly, and their works are the works of darkness, and they themselves workers of iniquity; they deny God and the power of godliness.

Some professors seem to be holy in God's house, who live very ungodly in their own houses: they seem to be religious in the church, and in the worship of God, but they are irreligious at home, in their shops and callings, trading and living in sin and ungodliness. These having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof.

Now the reasons why formal professors deny the power of godliness, are, 1. Because their hearts are not right with God. Simon Magus believed and was baptized, and worshipped God, but his heart was not right with God. There is a carnal enmity in their hearts against God, and the power of godliness; though they like the outward form, yet they love not the inward power of godliness.

2. Because the inward power of godliness is cross to their outward and worldly interests, therefore they deny the power thereof. The formalist saith within himself, Though I be religious, a church member, &c. yet I am resolved to make my religion and church fellowship comport with my interest in the world; and to be subservient unto my honour, credit, profit, yea, and my pleasure, delight and contentment, &c.

When formal professors discern that the power of godliness will not only check and curb their vile affections, perverse wills, and sinful desires; but also will mortify, kill and

destroy their lusts and corruptions, root and branch, then they refuse and deny the power of godliness.

Rather than the formalist will hazard the loss of life, liberty or estate, and expose himself to poverty, prison, banishment or death for his religion, he will deny Christ, deny God, and the power of godliness.

3. Because the power of godliness engageth professors to follow holiness, and to deny all ungodliness, Titus ii. 11, 12. Such professors as have the form of godliness only, are very apt to rest in the external part and performance of holy duties, and sacred ordinances, without the enjoyment of God, and Jesus Christ. But the truth and life of grace, and the power of godliness, will not suffer the soul to rest in duties and ordinances, without the enjoyment of fellowship and communion with God; therefore the formalist will not close with the power of godliness, but refuseth and denieth it, because he is unwilling to leave his sins. I shall now make some applica-

tion of what I have said touching the form and power of godliness.

1. Use of instruction to virgin professors.

There are three things necessary unto the form of godliness, viz. 1. The knowledge of the revealed will of God in his written word touching Christ's institution of gospel ordinances, and his constitution of the worship of God therein and thereby. How can any person worship God in spirit and truth, as true worshippers ought to do, unless they understand, and know the truth revealed in the holy scriptures?

Ignorant persons are not capable of performing the external part of the worship of God, for they do not know it. The Athenians worshipped the unknown God, which the apostle told them was their great superstition; and our Saviour told the woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what:" so then knowledge is necessary unto the form of godliness.

Many persons think it is enough that their ministers know how they ought to worship

God, and so are willingly ignorant, whose fear towards God is taught by the precepts of men, and they willingly walk after the commandments, Hos. v. 11; which formality of conformity Christ reprehended. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

2. In the form of godliness there must be a conformity unto the revealed will of God in his word, especially in the external part of the instituted worship of God in the gospel.

Uniformity in worship in any nation or congregation, without conformity unto the rule or canon of the holy scripture, is but superstition, and a worshipping God after the inventions and traditions of men; which the apostle reproveth in the Colossians, and calls will-worship.

"The temple, the altar, and they that worship therein," (that is, the church, the worship of God, and the worshippers of God,) are to be measured by the reed or rod of the sanctuary, that is, by the written word of God, Rev. xi. 1. Moses was com-

manded to do all things according to the pattern that God shewed him in the mount, Heb. viii. 5; and the prophet Ezekiel was commanded to shew the house of God's worship to the house of Israel, and admonished them to measure the pattern, Ezek. xliii. 10.

3. In the form of godliness there ought to be an uniformity among all the churches of God in every nation, in every city, and in every village. All that worship God in one place are to worship him in one way, with one accord and with one shoulder. It was so in the apostles' days; "Being of one accord, of one mind:" and so it shall be in the last days. "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me," that is, worship me, "for ever."

This uniformity was tacitly hinted by the apostle, in reproving the confusion that was in the church of Corinth. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

Uniformity in worship, not after the invention of men, but according to the writ-

ten word of God, makes for peace, unity, and edification in the churches of saints, and is a special means to avoid confusion and disorder in the worship of God, 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

2. Use of conviction. 1. Of those foolish virgin professors, who rest in the form of godliness without the power of it. They may hereby be convinced, 1. That their hearts are not right with God, though they do materially that which is right in the sight of God; but are like Amaziah, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart, 2 Chron. xxv. 2. And whosoever rests in a form of godliness without the power thereof, deceiveth his own heart, and his religion is in vain, James i. 26.

Such may be convinced, 2. That in all their solemn appearings before God, and their approachings nigh unto him, their hearts are far from him, Isai. xxix. 13; and testifies that all their worship is in vain, and they themselves hypocrites, Matt. xv. 7—9. As the heart is, so is the worshipper in the

sight of God. If the heart be proud, covetous, vain, foolish, lukewarm, formal and hypocritical, all that professor's duties, performances and worship, is abhorred of God, his soul hateth them. "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations," Isai. lxvi. 3.

'They may be convinced, 3. That they shall never see God in heaven, for, "Without holiness," the power of godliness, "no man

shall see the Lord." They are declared by God in his word to be hypocrites, Matt. xv. 7—9; and if they repent not, they shall have their portion with hypocrites, in the lowest and deepest of eternal flames, and of everlasting darkness; "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxiv. 51.

3. Use of consolation unto the wise virgins. Art thou an Israelite indeed? Dost thou worship God in spirit and truth? Hast thou both the form and power of godliness? Then be of good comfort. For, 1. Christ is thine, and all is thine, 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. God is thy father, grace is thy portion, and heaven is thine inheritance; holiness is thy way, and happiness will be thine end, Matt. v. 8.

2. Thou dost and shalt enjoy spiritual communion with God in holy duties, and in his sacred ordinances. The power of godliness doth make the believer fruitful under that form of godliness which Christ hath instituted for the worship of God; and affords

him fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, 1 John i. 1—3.

3. Know for thy comfort, that the power of sin, satan, hell, cannot, shall not prevail against the power of godliness in thee, so far as to provoke the Lord to forsake thee for ever, or to cause thee to forsake God for ever, “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, never, never forsake thee,” Heb. xiii. 5. Read for thy comfort the following passages; “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” The power of godliness in thee, will by the power of Christ prevail against, conquer, and overcome the power of darkness, and all the wiles of the wicked one, 1 John ii. 13; also the power of this world, Ephes. vi. 12, 13; the threats and allurements thereof, 1 John v. 4, 5; and likewise the power of sin, both the reigning power thereof, called the do-

minion of sin; “ For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace ;” and the tyrannizing power thereof, called the captivity of sin, Rom. vii. 2, 3 ; “ For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rejoice therefore in the Lord and bless him, 1 Pet. i. 3—8.

4. Use of exhortation, 1. To the profane. 2. To professors. And 3. To true believers.

First, A word to all profane persons, who have neither the power nor the form of godliness. I exhort such to consider their woeful state and miserable condition, being all of them without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. David tells profane sinners, “ The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” You can live without Christ, trade without Christ, marry and give in marriage without Christ ; but tell me, ye profane sinners, what will you do if you die without Christ ? Can you think seriously

of going to hell, and being tormented there to eternity? Will the enjoyment of the pleasures of sin for a season compensate the loss of your souls, and the pains of hell for ever?

Secondly, A word to the foolish virgin professors, who having a form of godliness deny the power thereof. I exhort such to consider seriously whether seeming to be religious, and saying, Lord, Lord, will save your immortal souls? “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.” Remember professors, that the foolish virgins had their lamps lighted, and they shined in the form of godliness, but they found the door of the kingdom of heaven shut against them. And when they

said, Lord, Lord, open to us, Christ said unto them, I know you not, because they had not the power of godliness. “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” “ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out,” Luke xiii. 24, 28.

Do not rest in a form, without the power of godliness, lest you sitting down in any church of saints, and under the sacred ordinances of God without Christ, come short of heaven, for, “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” Heb. xii. 14. “ The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.”

Thirdly, A word to the wise virgins that have not only the form but the power of godliness, whom I exhort, 1. To exercise the power of godliness in the performance of holy duties, and in partaking of God’s holy ordinances, and not to rest in the form and external part of the worship of God.

2. To demonstrate unto all that you have the power of godliness by being holy in all manner of conversation, both in the house of God, and in your own houses, shewing forth the virtue of him that hath called you; whereby the faith, humility, self-denial, patience, the love and life of Jesus Christ, may be manifested in your life.

Query 1. How may professors attain unto the power of godliness, and so become wise virgins?

Solution 1. Professors must come to Christ in the ordinances of God, 1 Cor. i. 18, 24. Christ complained of the Jewish professors that they would not come to him; "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Many come to sermons, to duties, to ordinances, but few come to Christ; most rest in the form without the power of godliness, satisfying themselves in coming to sermons, and attending upon ordinances, without going to Christ in them, Isai. lv. 3.

2. The gospel must come to professors not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, 1 Thess. i. 5; before they

can come to Christ, or attain to the power of godliness.

3. The ministers of Christ must declare the testimony of God, not with excellency of speech, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom; but their speech and their preaching must be in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 1 Cor. ii. 1—5, before the gospel can come to their hearers' hearts in power, and in the Holy Spirit; before their hearers can come to Christ; and before they can attain to the power of godliness. The plain and powerful preaching of the gospel, is the ordinary means whereby God draws sinners with cords of love to Christ, and makes the ministry of the word powerful and effectual to call, convert, sanctify and save sinners, Rom. i. 16, 17; Rom. x. 14, 17.

Query 2. How may professors know that they have attained unto the power of godliness, and that they are wise virgins.

Solution. Professors may know that they have attained unto the power of godliness, and are wise virgins, 1. By the victory they

have obtained over the world, satan, and their own sins. There are none but true believers have overcome the world, 1 John v. 4, 5. None but those that are strong in faith have overcome the devil, that wicked one, 1 John ii. 14. It is the truth of faith, and the power of godliness, whereby sanctified persons do overcome their sinful lusts and corruptions; the grace of God teacheth all men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, Titus ii. 12.

2. By the lively acts and constant exercise of grace. In whomsoever the power of godliness is, it will appear in the growth and exercise of grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Such christians are fruitful under God's holy ordinances, John xv. 5. The gospel came to them not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, 1 Thess. i. 5: and their faith did grow exceedingly, and the love of them all exceeded, 2 Thess. i. 3.

3. By their holy conversation in the world: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the

grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." The power of godliness will appear in a holy life and heavenly conversation, as it did in the primitive saints; "For our conversation is in heaven:" whereunto they were exhorted to be holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15.

Query 3. Are they that have the power of godliness, obliged to the form of godliness?

Solution. Yea; the apostle commended the church and saints in Corinth, for keeping the ordinances of God: "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you," 1 Cor. xi. 2; and the apostle Peter commanded them to be baptized with water, who had received the Holy Spirit, Acts x. 47, 48. All the apostles, the churches of saints, and all true believers, looked at themselves to be obliged to the external form of godliness and worship of God in external gospel ordinances, as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles, and in their Epistles.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

The bridegroom is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here said to tarry or delay his coming, Matt. xxiv. 48; which he will not do in respect of the time appointed of the Father; then “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” But Christ is said to tarry, or delay his coming,

1. Because he came not when they prayed for his coming, and earnestly desired his presence and appearance. Thus Jesus tarried two days after Lazarus’s sisters had sent him word that he was sick, and yet came in due time, and manifested himself with power and great glory, in raising Lazarus from the dead, John xi. 43, 44.

2. Because he came not when they looked for him, and at the time when they expected his coming. The apostle tells us, “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,” saith Christ.

“They all slumbered and slept.” All the virgins, both the foolish and wise vir-

gins. First, they all slumbered or nodded, that is to say, they did not wake and watch as formerly they had done, while they waited for and expected the glorious appearance of their Lord, and bare their testimony of his coming; but began to be careless and secure, neglecting their duty. They became drowsy and indisposed to wait any longer for the coming of the bridegroom, grew weary, silent, and sleepy, as the spouse did between her intreating and inviting her beloved to come into his garden, and his coming; "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

Secondly, They all slept, or were fast asleep; that is to say, the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, were fallen into a state of security, as persons are when they are fast asleep in the night season, fearing neither fire, thieves, or any other danger. So all these ten virgins, (it being now near midnight,) were fast asleep, as it were in a dead sleep, through their carnal security, and careless neglect of their watch, and other holy duties. Some of them were backslidden into a deep apostasy, and so continued

till the cry at midnight awaked them out of that deep sleep of carnal security, backsliding and apostasy, into which they were fallen, as appears in the sixth and seventh verses of this chapter.

Meditation. Many virgin professors being mistaken about this time of Christ's coming, who tarried longer than they expected, will fall into the slumber of sinful silence, and careless security: and some professors will fall into a dead and deadly sleep of backsliding and apostasy. This meditation consists of four propositions.

First. Many virgin professors have been and are mistaken about this time of Christ's coming; and that doth appear by what many learned and godly men have written, and witnessed touching the coming of Christ. Many have looked for the coming of Christ, as the judge of quick and dead; "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom:" and that at the end of the world, 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11; when he shall give up his

kingdom to the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. But few have expected the coming of Christ as the bridegroom, and the new Jerusalem to come down from heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband, Rev. xxi. 1, 2. Who looks for the marriage of the Lamb? and who will grant that his bride shall make herself ready to be married to Christ, and to live and reign with Christ a thousand years here on earth, between the final destruction of the beast and the false prophet, and the eternal judgment of the last day? Rev. xx. 4. But more will be spoken of the coming of Christ, in the exposition of the next verse.

Secondly. The bridegroom tarried longer than the virgins expected, “While the bridegroom tarried,” saith the text. They expected his coming while they were awake, watching and witnessing, praying and looking for him, but he tarried till they all slumbered and slept, and then he came at midnight, at an hour, (in a dispensation,) when they looked not for him; “Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think

not, the Son of man cometh." "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looked not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware of him." "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." And in 1 Thess. v. 2; "For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

Thirdly. The generality of virgin professors will fall into the slumber of a sinful silence, neglect to watch and wait for the spiritual bridegroom, and grow careless and secure whilst he tarries.

So long as virgin professors will be speaking of Christ's coming and kingdom, and talking of his power, (as was prophesied the latter days saints shall do, Psalm cxlv. 11;) whilst they are praying continually for the coming and kingdom of Christ, as he taught his disciples to pray, Matt. vi. 10, "Thy kingdom come;" and whilst they are watching and waiting for the Lord from heaven, in his glorious appearance with kingly power and majesty, as the saints

were exhorted by the apostle to do, “ To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven :” I say, so long as virgin professors are so doing they will not, cannot, shall not slumber nor sleep. But when they begin to be silent in bearing their testimony for the kingdom of Christ against the kingdom of antichrist, and will not, dare not speak of his glorious coming and kingdom as the bridegroom, but give over praying for it, and waiting for him ; then they begin to be careless of his coming, and to grow secure, and being at ease in Zion begin to slumber, and at last some of them fall fast asleep.

Fourthly. Some professors will fall into a ^{deep} and deadly sleep of backsliding and apostasy. As some of the latter day saints will be shining believers, Isai. lx. 1, 2 ; so some of the virgin professors, in the last days, will prove backsliding formalists, and damnable apostates ; and this grand and greatest apostasy, hath these four steps or gradations. 1. A liberal, inordinate resting and reposing their hearts in, and upon

worldly contentments. 2. A cooling in their affections, and careless neglect of holy duties, ordinances, and the pure worship of God. 3. A fearlessness of declining and backsliding. 4. A benumbed deadness, hardness, insensibility, security, and contentedness, being at ease and rest, and so fall asleep in that condition; and this will happen a little before the coming of Christ. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him; That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." This apostasy was foretold also by the apostle Peter, in his second Epistle, the third chapter, and the third and fourth verses. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is

the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The apostle Paul also forewarned Timothy, that in the last days, which will be perilous times, men eminent for profession, having the form of godliness, will deny the power thereof, through their own lusts. There are two expressions used by both those apostles, touching this grand and last apostasy, which doth confirm my opinion, that they both prophesied and writ of the same apostasy. Paul saith, "This know also, that in the last days," 2 Tim. iii. 1. And Peter saith, "Knowing that first, that in the latter days," &c.

The root of this grand and last apostasy is self-love, and love of pleasures, which the apostle in his Epistle to Timothy, notes to be the chief character of the formal professors, and apostates in the last days, 2 Tim. iii. 2. 4; "The men of name shall be lovers of their own selves, and lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God." These sinful pleasures, and worldly contents, cause pro-

fessors to slumber, and some to fall fast asleep in apostasy. Self-love is that root of bitterness, out of which those unblessed, yea those cursed branches of sinful lusts there mentioned, do sprout and grow; especially covetousness, pride, and covenant-breaking. And the love of pleasures is the corrupt fountain, from whence the bitter waters of those sinful lusts, spring and flow.

Let him that hath understanding, judge what I say. If men not profane only, but professors also, not only the men of the world, but also members of churches, do love themselves more than truth and righteousness, and love the world more than faith and a good conscience, yea, love their vain, sinful delights and pleasures more than God and Jesus Christ, may not those and such as those, be ranked and numbered among the apostates and backsliders of the last days? By how much the more we see and know men that have been very eminent in profession above many others, and have been highly esteemed in the churches of saints, men of name, chief men among the

brethren, yea among the elders for knowledge, gifts, zeal, &c. who have borne a glorious testimony for Christ against anti-christ; but yet have afterwards, through love of themselves, and love of pleasures, and other sinful lusts, backslided, revolted and apostalized from what they formerly practised, and professed before many witnesses—may we not conclude them to be among the number of the apostates of the last days?

“ And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.”

1. Night doth mystically and metaphorically signify a time of rest, ease, and quietness; also drowsiness, sluggishness, and a lazy disposition; likewise a condition of a sinful, careless security. “ And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” “ For your-

selves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night." "But, and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: The lord of the servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of."

2. A condition and time of great darkness, discomfort, sore afflictions, and heavy judgments. "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt." "Therefore night shall be unto you that ye shall not have a vision, and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine, and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips: for there

is no answer of God." "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God."

3. A time of greatest retirement and repose for most serious devotion, and spiritual meditation, and holy contemplation; "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons." "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not."

This midnight dispensation in the text, doth mystically, and metaphorically signify all these three particular conditions, at the time of the Bridegroom's coming, with respect to the several sorts of persons who will be then, and in that day concerned therein: viz. The foolish virgins will then be found in a sluggish disposition, and condition of a sinful, careless security; so sleepy that their lamps go out. And the wise vir-

gins will be too secure, and careless at that time.

Secondly. Worldly professors, who are taught to worship God according to the commandments and precepts of men, and the inventions and superstitions of men, will then be found under great darkness, discomfort, and amazement. “ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea, and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory,” because of the sore afflictions, and righteous judgments of God. “ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor never shall be.” “ Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from

heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Thirdly. There will be some, a few, a small remnant of virgin saints who will accompany the bridegroom when he comes, even in the midnight dispensation; and they are those hundred, and forty, and four thousand, who have their Father's name written in their foreheads, Rev. xiv. 1—5; being in their retirement, repose, and secret devotion, formerly sealed for the servants of God, Rev. vii. 3, 4; and now come with the Bridegroom, and shall stand with the Lamb upon Mount Sion, being without fault before the throne of God.

"There was a cry made," &c. The question is, 1. What cry this was? 2. Who made this cry? 3. Who heard this cry?

Touching the first question, What cry this was; I answer, the Greek word doth, both here and in many other places of scrip-

ture, signify a very loud, fierce, and vehement cry, as Acts 7. 57 ; “ They cried out with a loud voice,” Acts xix. 28 ; as an herald at arms cries out with a loud voice, when he proclaims an edict ; or when the common cryer makes proclamation. “ He cried with a loud voice,” &c. Rev. vii. 2 ; x. 3 ; xix. 17.

Touching the second question, Who made this cry ; I answer, either the Lord himself, or the ministers of Christ, or the people of God. This cry is either by preaching the coming of Christ publicly ; “ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet ;” Matt. xxiv. 14 ; and the gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed, or preached publicly, in all the inhabited world ; or else a cry raised by the voice of a great number of the saints, and servants of God, in the temple of God that was opened in heaven ; “ A voice of the Lord, a voice from the temple,” after the resurrection of the two prophetic witnesses of Christ, which the beast had killed. Compare, Rev. xi. 7, 11, 12, 17, 19 ; “ And they heard a great voice

from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither;" with Rev. xix. 1, 4—9. "And a voice came out of the throne; and I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. These are the true sayings of God," or by the Lord himself. "Jehovah also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." Read Haggai ii. 6, 7; and Heb. xii. 26, 27; "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" from heaven.

Touching the third question, Who heard the cry? I answer, All the virgins both wise and foolish heard this cry; "The Bridegroom cometh, Go ye out to meet him," as appears in the next verse. For they all, being awakened by that loud cry, rose and trimmed their lamps; and probably there were many others, even great multitudes that heard this cry, or proclamation of the

Bridegroom's coming, who were glad and rejoiced that the marriage of the Lamb was come; and that doth appear by what is prophesied, Rev. xix. 1—9.

The sum and substance of this cry is contained in these words, “ Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;” wherein are three things to be observed, viz. 1. The attention, Behold. 2. The assertion, “ the bridegroom cometh.” 3. The obligation, or duty enjoined and commanded, “ Go ye out to meet him.”

When God would have some wonderful and glorious thing made known unto the world, and unto his people, he stirs up their attention by this word, Behold; Isai. lxxv. 1; Zeph. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 John iii. 1; Rev. xv. 5; xxi. 5; especially when God speaks of his Son, Jesus Christ, Isai. xxviii. 16; John i. 29; Rev. i. 7; xvi. 15; xxii. 7; “ Behold he cometh,” &c. “ Behold I come quickly.” So in the text, “ Behold the bridegroom cometh.” This is a matter which is worthy of, and calls for the churches, ministers, and saints attention.

“ The bridegroom cometh.” It is not said he will come, though that is true ; “ Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” But he cometh ; he is upon his march, Rev. xix. 11.—15. He hath been coming a great while ; he went forth long ago, Rev. vi. 2 ; and now he is very near, even at the door, ready to enter into the bride-chamber ; only he stands and stays at the door, till the bride hath made herself ready, Rev. xix. 7, 8, 10. “ And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

Seeing that many both learned and godly men have been mistaken in their opinions about the coming of Christ, as was hinted in the exposition of the former verse, it concerns the churches of saints, the ministers of Christ, and all sanctified believers, to search the holy scriptures, and pray that God will, by his Holy Spirit, open his scriptures to us, and open our understanding thereby in this his coming.

And now let not the churches, ministers, nor any of the saints, be offended with me for

shewing my opinion, touching this coming of Christ, and the scripture grounds and reasons for the same, which I humbly offer with all submission unto their judgment.

I do believe and am persuaded, that the coming of Christ, spoken of in this parable, is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the earth, though I do believe Christ will come the second time in his own person upon the earth, Heb. ix. 28; Zech. xiv. 4, 5; but this, is his virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming in his saints and sanction, as the bridegroom of his church the new Jerusalem, who shall also come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Our David's mystical kingdom on earth among his saints, when he shall be king of all the earth, and all the kingdoms of this world shall be Christ's. And when the Lord's redeemed ones, whom he hath made kings and priests to God, shall have the kingdom, and dominion under the whole heaven given to them, and they shall reign on earth.

And the reasons grounded on scripture, are as followeth. 1. Negatively. 2. Affirmatively.

Negatively. That the coming of Christ spoken of in this parable, is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the earth. First, Because at the personal coming of Christ on earth, called his appearing the second time, Heb. ix. 28; all his saints shall come with him, 1 Thess. iii. 13. "And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," Zech. xiv. 5. At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints, the living bodies of the saints shall be changed and glorified; and the bodies of the saints deceased shall then be raised, and also glorified. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them

also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." But there will not be such a general, and physical resurrection at the coming of Christ as the bridegroom, for then the living saints only, shall enter into the bride-chamber; and those wise virgins who never came personally into the kingdom of the Father in heaven, shall be admitted into the kingdom of the Son on earth. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne;" which Christ himself expounds,

saying, "To him will I give power over the nations, even as," or the same power that, "I received of my Father."

Secondly. Because at the personal coming of Christ on earth, will be the universal, physical resurrection of all that are dead, and the physical change of all their bodies that are then alive. "Behold I shew you a mystery, We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Which resurrection Christ in John vi. 39, 40, 44; three times together, testifies shall be at the last day; and Matthew, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory;" compared with Rev. xx. 11--13. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;

and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man according to their works:" together with the eternal judgment; Matt. xxv. 33, 34, 46; 2 Thess. i. 7—10; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Jude xiv. 15; Rev. xx. 12.

Thirdly, Because when Christ comes virtually and spiritually as the bridegroom, then will begin the times of the restitution of all things. Then God will restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning, Isai. i. 25—27. Then Christ will restore Israel, and restore the kingdom to Israel; "Even the first dominion shall come to the daughter of Zion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." Then Christ will make all things new, Rev. xxi. 5. But when Christ shall come personally upon earth, as the

judge of quick and dead, then will be the dissolution of the material heavens and earth, and the final consumption and conflagration of all things, 2 Pet. iii. 7, 12: "When the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Now consider that this great desolation of all things, yea of the material heavens and earth, which the scripture testifies will be at Christ's second coming, cannot be at the beginning of his kingdom here on earth for above a thousand years; after that time Gog and Magog will be gathered together, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 4—9.

Objection. Doth not this opinion exempt and exclude Christ from rule and sovereignty in his monarchical kingdom on earth, contrary to Rev. xx. 4, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years?"

Answer. No. Consider first, Christ may be said to be with a person or people, and they with him virtually by his spirit

and power, or his powerful spiritual presence, *Isai.* lvii. 15; *2 Cor.* vi. 16; *Rev.* ii. 1; *Rom.* vi. 4; *Col.* ii. 12, 13. As it is said, "Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her King in her?" though not personally but spiritually.

Secondly. As Christ is said to be in his mystical kingdom, the church of God here on earth, where his laws, his statutes, and his ordinances are dispensed in his name, and by the power of his Holy Spirit; so will he be in his monarchical kingdom, the throne of his father David here on earth. "And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;" not personally at the beginning of it, but virtually by his laws, &c.

Did not the Cæsars and Roman Senate govern the world by their laws and edicts, and by those kings and governors of provinces, whom they commissioned and made rulers for them? Is not the king of Spain said to rule and reign in those parts of

America, and in other parts of the world, which he or his ancestors conquered by his laws, civil and ecclesiastical, although he himself was never present there in his own person? And doth not the pope reign over the kings and kingdoms of the earth, who have agreed and given their kingdom to the beast, Rev. xvii. 17, 18; though he was never personally in those kingdoms, but gives commissions to his kings, his nuncio's, his cardinals, and his prelates, to rule in his name; and by his laws, and edicts, canons and constitutions, to govern the people in those his kingdoms?

So shall Christ reign over all the nations and kingdoms of the world whom he shall conquer, and they shall become his, Rev. xi. 5. And he shall be king of all the earth, Zech. xiv. 9. And God shall give him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32, 33. And the judgment shall be given to the saints of the most High, and they shall possess the kingdom, and govern the nations by Christ's laws, Dan. vii. 14, 21, 27; and in his name, and by his com-

mission, with his Holy Spirit, and power, and in great glory. “ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations :” from the beginning of the thousand years’ reign, Rev. xx. 4 ; until the end thereof, which is Christ’s Davidical and monarchical kingdom. And after that Christ hath put down all rule, all authority, and all power, that are his enemies, by the hands of his saints, who shall bind kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron, and execute the judgment written ; “ This honour have all his saints,” Psal. cxlix. Then will the Lord Jesus Christ come in his own person, and all his holy angels and saints shall attend him ; “ When the Son of man shall

come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and the saints shall sit upon thrones with Christ: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even also as I overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

This personal coming of Christ had its typical vision, and mystical appearance, at his transfiguration. "And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart. And was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

And, as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man rise again from the dead." Those apostles, Peter, James, and John his brother, were they of whom Christ spake, Matt. xvi. 27, 28, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." And Peter being one of those three. bare his testimony and record thereof: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.'" And it shall be visi-

ble indeed ; “ For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” “ He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Acts i. 11. And very glorious ; for Christ shall come in the glory of his Father, Mark viii. 38 ; “ In his own glory, and his Father’s, and of the holy angels,” Luke ix. 26 ; and likewise in the glory of all his saints, 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

Then shall Christ the king of saints, the king of Sion, and the king of nations, be admired of all them that believe, and praised, saying, “ Who would not fear thee, O king of nations,” Jer. x. 7. “ The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Then also shall the saints be glorified ; “ For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” “ Behold now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ;

but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," and be rewarded. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Then wicked men and wicked angels, shall by Christ and his saints, be judged according to their deeds; "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" "I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom." And then shall Christ deliver up the kingdom to God the Father; that as Christ is now all in all, Col. iii. 11, so God the Father then shall be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. Thus much negatively.

Affirmatively. That the coming of Christ, in the sixth and tenth verses of this chapter, is his virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious appearance in his saints and sanction, (as the bridegroom of his church,

the new Jerusalem, the holy city, the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven, who also shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,) and in his Davidical kingdom on earth.

For proof of this my opinion, search those places of holy scripture. “ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.” “ The Lord said unto

my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.” “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” “And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he

goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” “To the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth! for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat

upon the throne, said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." Christ, not in his own person, but by his substitutes, doth marry his church, "So shall thy sons marry thee," Isai. lxii. 2.

"Go ye out to meet him." The virgins went out before, and that of their own accord, and very early too; but now they are called out, and that by a loud voice, and are commanded, "Go ye out to meet him." They who at first were so forward, are now at last so backward, that they must be provoked, stirred up, yea roused out of their slumbering, sleeping, careless security; and commanded if not compelled to go out again to meet the bridegroom.

The spouse of Christ said within herself, "I will rise now, I will seek him whom my soul loveth." And she said to her beloved, "Come my beloved, let us get up early to the vineyards, there will I give thee my loves." But for all this her fervency, she cooled in her spiritual affections towards Christ, was sleepy and indisposed for

spiritual communion with her beloved: she framed excuses, being lazy, and loth to open the door, though she heard him call her, and knew his voice. “ I sleep but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? Cant. v. 2, 3.

It hath been hinted in the exposition of the first verse, in what respects the virgins went out to meet the bridegroom.

Let us consider what is further intended, and here commanded them in these words, “ Go ye out to meet him.”

By going out again to meet the bridegroom, we may here understand three things. 1, A rising and shaking off all security, carelessness, and indisposition, to watch and wait for the appearance of Christ. “ And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of

sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

2. A recovering themselves out of their backsliding, and apostatizing condition, by prayer, repentance, and reformation. "Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: and I

will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Read the fourteenth chapter of Hosea.

3. A preparing to meet the Lord. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary," 2 Chron. xxx. 19. "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord:" so did those virgins—the foolish seemingly, the wise sincerely. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

1. Meditation. There will be a midnight dispensation of mystical and spiritual darkness upon professors; "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Distress, and perplexity, and great tribulation upon the inhabitants of the earth; "There shall be upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity, men's

hearts failing them for fear." And too great security, formality, and drowsiness, upon some of the wise virgins, sanctified believers, before the coming of the Lord Jesus in his kingdom here on earth; "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" "Watch and pray," &c. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." As it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

2. Meditation. That there will be such a voice of the Lord, such a voice from the city and from the temple, such a loud cry in the time of the midnight dispensation, that will awake and rouse up all the slumbering and sleeping virgins; "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies." "And they," the slain or dispirited witnesses, "heard a great voice

from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither." "Jehovah also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem."

3. Meditation. That the next glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be his virtual and spiritual coming in his saints and sanction, as the bridegroom of his church, to marry her by her sons, Isai. lxii. 4, 5; and by them to reign over the nations with power and great glory a thousand years here on earth.

There are but three special kinds and times of Christ's coming. 1. His coming in the form of a servant in the days of his flesh, Phill. ii. 7. 2. His coming as a judge at the last day, when he shall judge the quick and the dead, 2 Tim. iv. 1; called his appearing the second time, Heb. ix. 28: both these are his personal appearances or his coming in his own person. But between these two appearances or comings of Christ in his own person, there is witnessed by the holy prophets and apostles, and recorded in the holy scripture of truth, another kind of Christ's coming at another time. And that

is, his coming as the bridegroom, and as the only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15; Rev. xix. 16; which is his virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming in his saints and sanction, and by them to marry his Jerusalem, "So shall thy sons marry thee;" and with them to reign over the nations and kingdoms of the world, a thousand years on earth. "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and

give honour to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." " And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands : and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. And when the thousand years are expired, satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city : and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

4. Meditation. It is the duty of all virgin professors, especially sanctified believers, who are wise virgins, to go out and meet the bridegroom, when he comes by his spiritual power

and glory in his saints and sanction, to set up his kingdom and to reign on earth.

First, The Lord Jesus Christ who is King of saints, Rev. xv. 3; King of Zion, Psal. cxlix. 2; and King of nations, Jer. x. 7; shall be the only potentate, 1 Tim. vi. 15; and King of all the earth, Zech. xiv. 9. And all the kingdoms of the world shall be his, Rev. xi. 15, and his saints, Dan. vii. 14, 22, 27. And they shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years, Rev. v. 10.

Secondly, The God of heaven will set up this kingdom of Christ and his saints, in the days of those kings of the fourth monarchy that oppose him and his saints, and give it unto Christ as he is the son of David, Luke i. 32, 33; and unto the saints of the most High, Dan. vii. 27; who shall take it and possess it a thousand years.

Thirdly, When Christ comes to set up his kingdom and to reign on earth virtually and spiritually in his saints and sanction, with power and great glory, it is the duty of all virgin professors, especially sanctified

believers, who are wise virgins, to go out to meet the bridegroom.

To meet the bridegroom implies, 1. To be walking in the same way of truth, wherein Christ comes, viz. To own that truth, and to witness unto that truth of the kingdom, and power, and glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ, against the kingdom, power, and glory of antichrist, which is the finishing testimony of all the faithful witnesses of Christ. “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them:” which testimony is that gospel of the kingdom of Christ that must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, Matt. xxiv. 14.

2. To meet the bridegroom implies a progress and going on in that way of truth, without weariness, fainting, sitting down, and slumbering: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?”

There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: and they shall walk and not faint."

3. To meet the bridegroom implies a diligent and continual watching and waiting for the virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious appearance of Christ the bridegroom. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. In the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." "For the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." "Watch

therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps," or cleansed their lamps.

The virgins being awakened by the cry at midnight, did all arise, that is to say, all those virgin professors began to shake off their carnal security, and rise from their beds of sloth, and laziness, and lukewarmness; "Rise up ye women that are at ease," Isai. xxxii. 9; Cant. iii. 2. And went out again to meet the bridegroom, as they were commanded, being glad to hear that Christ was now coming, in that midnight dispensation. They do as David did, "At midnight will I arise and give thanks unto thee." As Jonathan arose and went to meet David, so those virgin professors arose and went out again to meet the bridegroom, Christ Jesus, the Son of David. Now the virgins are awakened, and they call upon one another like the watchmen of Mount Ephraim, saying, "Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion, unto Jehovah our God." The coming of Christ the bridegroom, will be a morning of

such glorious light, that shineth from one end of the heavens unto the other, that will shine upon all the virgin professors, and cause the wise virgins to arise and shine as was prophesied: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." And in order to their shining profession the virgins being risen are said to trim their lamps.

"And trimmed their lamps." It seems whilst the virgins slumbered and slept, their lamps decayed, that is to say, The oil in their lamps wasted, and was spent, and the wick and smoking flax was burnt, and the light that had shined for some time, began to grow dim, and was going out, and some of their lamps were gone out, being foul and unsavory.

By trimming their lamps is meant all the means and endeavours those virgin professors used to cleanse and purge their lamps, to supply them with oil, and wick or flax, and

so to repair their light, and prepare themselves to meet the bridegroom, that is to say, Now that the virgins are awakened and risen up, they, especially the wise virgins, begin again to speak of the glory of Christ's kingdom, and to talk of his power; and prepare themselves for the coming and kingdom of Christ. The wise virgins having oil in their vessels, get their lamps supplied: and like the bride, the Lamb's wife, they make themselves ready. "And they that were ready went in with him," with Christ the bridegroom, "to the marriage." But the foolish virgins having no oil in their vessels, that is, they being without Christ, and not having the spiritual unction of the grace of God in their hearts, their lamps went out, and they were shut out of the marriage chamber, whilst they went to buy oil, even whilst they were seeking after Christ; "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are; then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

1. Meditation. The public testimony of the nearness of Christ's coming as the bridegroom, with spiritual power and great glory in his saints and sanction, will awaken and raise some virgin professors out of their security, backsliding, and apostasy.

That there will be a cry at midnight, viz. a loud voice from the Lord, a voice from the city, a voice from the temple, to wit, a public

ministerial testimony, even in the midst of the midnight dispensation; and saying, Behold the bridegroom cometh, hath been shewed in the exposition of the sixth verse, and the words of this seventh verse testify that loud voice or cry did awake and cause the virgins to rise. “Then all those virgins arose,” to wit, out of the slumber and sleep of their sinful silence, worldly ease, carnal security, careless formality, backsliding and apostasy; and some of them with their loins girt, and their lamps burning, did arise and shine, and went out again to meet the bridegroom.

2. Meditation. That some of the virgin professors shall be recovered out of their security, backsliding, and apostasy, and shall arise and shine at the coming of Jesus Christ as the bridegroom of his church.

God hath promised to heal the backslidings of his people upon their repentance and returning to the Lord. “Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.” Hosea

xiv. 1, 4. And he will cause the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to shine in their hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6; and make them shine in a holy, gospel conversation," Isai. lx. 1—3; to the praise and glory of God.

3. Meditation. It is the duty of virgin professors and church members, to prepare themselves for the coming of Christ as the bridegroom. "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh," Matt. xxiv. 44. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not," Luke xii. 35, 36, 40.

To be so prepared and ready, the wise virgins must put on their beautiful garments, Isai. lii. 1; and rejoice as Zion did: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of sal-

vation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," Isai. lxi.

10. And those that have spotted their garments of profession by any sinful conversation or compliance, ought to wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14: that so they all being clothed with fine linen white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints, Rev. xix. 8, as a bride adorned for her husband, Rev. xxi. 2, may walk with Christ in white. And being thus adorned and made ready to meet the bridegroom, may be counted worthy to enter with him into the marriage chamber.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

In these words consider, 1. The request that the foolish virgins made unto the wise, "Give us of your oil." 2. The reason of their request, "For our lamps are gone out."

The foolish virgin professors were now at last made sensible that they wanted oil, and that it was their great folly that they did take no oil with them, as the wise virgins did in their vessels, when they took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

1. Meditation. It argues and demonstrates very great folly in those virgin professors and church members, who seem to be religious, having a form of godliness, and are looking for and bearing testimony unto, the spiritual kingdom and glorious appearance and coming of Christ, the churches bridegroom, to be without Christ, and to want the Spirit of Christ, and the saving and sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ in their hearts.

Doubtless, now at last the foolish virgins were very sensible of their folly, in resting satisfied and contented with a profession of Christ without a possession of Christ; with having their lamps, and the form of godliness, without the oil of grace, and the

power of godliness; and with being in a gospel church state, and therein partaking of the holy ordinances of God, and enjoying fellowship with the wise virgin saints, and yet not being partakers of the divine nature, nor having communion and fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the ways and ordinances of God.

Now those foolish virgin professors wish they had some of the wise virgins' oil; O, say they, that we had Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the grace of Christ in our hearts. Now they ask and beg, they seek unto and intreat the wise virgin saints, saying, "Give us of your oil;" communicate of your saving and sanctifying graces to our souls.

2. Meditation. The time will come when foolish professors, and formal church members, will see and sadly experience their being without Christ, and their want of the Spirit and grace of God.

Many professors now can live without Christ, and without God, and without grace in the world, yea, in the churches of saints, and in the ordinances of the gospel, some-

times making a shining profession of Christ, and witnessing of, and bearing their testimony to, the kingdom and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: and at other times slumbering and sleeping in a carnal security, lukewarmness, formality, and backsliding apostasy; who when they are awakened by some midnight dispensation of God, will see, and be convinced, and made sensible of, their want and need of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and the grace of Christ.

The time will come when they shall see and know by a thorough conviction and woeful experience, that none but Christ, nothing but grace will supply their wants, nor satisfy their souls. "Give us of your oil:" Oh! that we had possession of Christ as you have; Oh! that the saving, sanctifying grace of God, and Spirit of God, were in our hearts as they are in yours. We now see our want of the power of godliness, truth of grace, and union and communion with Christ which you have and enjoy.

And though men and women, yea, some professors and church members can live

without Christ, buy and sell without Christ, build and plant without Christ, for they will be very busy about such things when the Son of man cometh, Luke xvii. 26–30; and some professors can have and hold communion with the saints in the churches, and holy ordinances of God, without Christ and grace: yet when Christ comes, yea when death comes, they are awakened by that midnight dispensation, then they see themselves lost and undone to eternity; then they know not what to do, nor how to die without Christ and without grace. Then they call and cry, send for and seek unto, the ministers and saints of God, and say, Pray for us, speak to us, pity us, tell us what we shall do; “O Men and Brethren what shall we do?” Acts ii. 37; and as the jailer did, Acts xvi. 30; “Sirs what shall I do to be saved?” and as the foolish virgins here did to the wise, “Give us of your oil.”

“For our lamps are gone out,” or are going out, as in the margin. This is the reason of their request, as if they had said, O ye wise virgin saints, sanctified believers.

who have union with Christ, who have obtained the precious faith of God's elect, and have received the grace of God in truth, and all the fruits of the Spirit; "Give us of your oil," communicate some of your saving, sanctifying grace unto us, for our lamps of professed gospel light, our shining temple light, all our spiritual gifts and common grace, all our former gospel enjoyments, even all our hopes and comforts are now decayed, withered, perished, and are ready to die, and be utterly extinguished; and we ourselves are in the dark, and must sit down and perish in eternal darkness, unless you can and will supply us with some of your spiritual oil; "For our lamps are gone out."

3. Meditation. That all the gospel-light that shines in the spiritual gifts, and religious actions of foolish and formal professors, will at last be extinguished, and go out, and they will fall away.

1. There are some formal professors that have received spiritual gifts from God; "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the

same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues,"

1 Cor. 12. One member of the church may have a word of knowledge, another a word of wisdom, another a gift of prophecy, another faith, not sanctifying faith, and all these and several other gifts may have been given them by the Holy Spirit of God, and yet not have Christ, nor the graces of faith and love in Christ Jesus. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cym-

bal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." "For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love;" Gal. v. 6. The apostle in these words, "Neither circumcision availeth any thing," sheweth and testifieth, that no privileges, ordinances, gifts, or administrations, that the Jews had under the law; "nor uncircumcision," that is to say, no privileges, ordinances, gifts, or administrations, which the Gentiles have under the gospel, will profit or avail them any thing in order unto the obtaining of eternal life, and everlasting salvation, without faith in Christ Jesus, that works by love, or as Paul saith, Gal. vi. 15, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing,

nor uncircumsion, but a new creature;" that is, unless the professing Jew or Gentile be a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17; that is, God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Ephes. ii. 10, that we should walk in them.

2. And some foolish and formal virgin professors may shine for a season in the acts and exercise of those spiritual gifts that they have received from God for the churches' edification. "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort." And they may also shine in some kind and degree of gospel-like conversation, and saint-like life, in respect of some external actions and outward performance of holy duties. And they may likewise shine like lamps and temple-lights in bearing their witness and testimony for Christ, his head-ship, ministry, churches, worship, kingdom, and government. And lastly, they may shine like lamps and burning lights in enduring

the afflictions of the gospel, in suffering the spoiling of their goods, imprisonment, banishment, yea, and death itself, 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

3. And yet after all this their lamps will go out, and those foolish and formal professors will fall away; “They on the rock are they, which when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Those hard-hearted hearers believed for a time. They made a profession of the faith of the gospel, and they made a confession too, and that before many witnesses; “But in time of temptation fell away.” When that hour of temptation comes upon them which Christ hath foretold shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth, Rev. iii. 10, then they will fall away; and the reason is, because they have no root, that is, they have not Christ, they are rooted in him; “As ye therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith,

as ye have been taught, abounding therein in thanksgiving." Faith in Christ never falls away: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." It is a faith without Christ that foolish professors depart from; "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

This verse contains the answer that the wise virgins gave to the request of the foolish virgins. Wherein,

1. They give them a denial, and the reason thereof: “ But the wise answered, saying, Not so ;” We may not, we cannot grant what you desire of us, “ Lest there be not enough for us and you.” As if the wise virgins had said, It is true indeed, we have oil in our vessels, and supply for our lamps; but we can spare none: our vessels have no more oil in them than we do and shall need for ourselves; “ Not so.” The Lord Jesus Christ hath given us his saving and sanctifying grace, but we may not, we cannot give it to you, no not the least measure of it; not a dram nor a drop can we give, nor can we spare any of it. We stand in need to get more grace for ourselves, lest we should not have enough in those hours and times of trials that we may meet with yet, ere we meet with the bridegroom; and lest we have not enough for those services of Christ, and sufferings for Christ, that our Lord may call us too, either before his coming, or when he comes, or after he is come as the bridegroom.

2. They gave the foolish virgins directions what to do in their condition; “ But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” Wherein we are to consider,
 1, Who they are that sell this spiritual oil.
 2, What it is to buy it.

The spiritual oil is the unction of the Holy One, 1 John, ii. 20, 27; that wherewith Christ was anointed above his fellows, Psal. xlv. 7; viz. the saving, sanctifying grace of God, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

They that sell this mystical and spiritual oil, are Christ, and his ministers, and servants. The Lord Jesus Christ is the owner of this oil, and he himself doth sometimes sell it, or offer it to sale, as he did to the church of Laodicea. “ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. But ordinarily and commonly Christ authoriseth and commandeth his faithful servants, the minis-

ters of the gospel, whom he appointeth, commissioneth, and sends to offer this spiritual oil to sale, and to sell it unto whomsoever will buy it. “Hearken to me ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,” John vii. 37. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely,” Rev. xxii. 17. For as it was a great sin in Simon Magus to offer money, and to think that the gifts of the Holy Ghost might be bought with material money, so it is a very great sin in any minister to sell this mystical oil for material silver or gold, or any price, or earthly commodity. And it is a very great mistake in foolish professors, to think they may buy, that is, bargain with God for Christ and grace upon the terms of the old covenant of

works, and their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, Isai. lxiv. 6.

To buy this spiritual oil, implies three things, 1. A sense of want and need of it, which the foolish virgins now had. 2. Attending upon the ministry of the word and administrations of the gospel to obtain it, or to get some of this oil, having their heart and hand open and willing to receive it; “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul,” Acts xvi. 14. 3. A willingness to have it upon Christ’s own terms of free grace, without money and without price: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your

soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely,” Rev. xxi. 6. “ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely.”

1. Meditation. That virgin saints who have the greatest and fullest measure of grace and holiness, cannot give or impart any of it unto others.

“ And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil;” that is, impart some of your grace unto us: but the wise answered and said, “ Not so,” we cannot give you grace, nor can we impart any of our grace to you. Oh! saith a dying father, mother, or some other relation, I am without Christ, I have no grace, I am ready to die and be damned,

and I shall perish to all eternity. O, dear wife, child, husband, or other godly relation, that my soul were in your soul's condition. Oh! speak comfort and peace to me; Oh! that I had Christ, grace, pardon, or any hopes of eternal life. But then those godly relations must say, It is not in me, I cannot impart any grace to you: Christ must give you of his Spirit, and God must give you of his grace, I cannot.

Godly parents and relations may and ought to pray, that God will give pardoning grace, sanctifying grace, saving grace, to their children, or to any other relations, but they cannot give any, nor can they impart any grace to them.

Abraham could not give grace to Ishmael, nor could Isaac impart grace to Esau, nor Jacob to Reuben; no, nor David to Absalom, nor Job to his wife. Neither could Paul impart grace to his country-men, for whom his heart's desire and prayer was, that they might be saved; and although he was willing to be accursed for them, as the holy scriptures of truth testify.

2. Meditation. Every saint and sanctified believer will, ere he get to heaven, stand in need of all the grace he hath.

Sanctified believers, called saints, may meet with such fiery trials, such hellish temptations, such powerful stirrings of corruptions, and so great variety of afflictions, tribulations, persecutions and sufferings; yea, such hours and powers of darkness, and so deep desertions, that will call for and require the virgins' lively acts and exercise of all the grace of God they have; yea, and they may be necessitated to go to Christ for more grace as the apostles did. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon me." Believers will have need of all the grace they have, when they come to die, and be dissolved.

3. Meditation. It is the duty of every person, that sees their need and want of Christ, his Holy Spirit, and sanctifying grace, to attend upon the ministry of the gospel and administrations of the holy ordinances of God, and to accept and receive Christ and grace, offered freely without money or price.

Many sinners are so blinded, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, that they see no form nor comeliness in Christ; and when they do see some beauty and excellency in him, yet they are apt to refuse and reject him, until they be thoroughly convinced of their want and need of him, his Spirit and grace, and that there is not salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. And then they begin to desire and say, Oh! that I had Christ; Oh! that I had grace; Oh! that I could believe. Now it is their duty to attend diligently, and conscionably upon the ministry of the gospel and means of grace; for faith comes by hearing the word

preached, Rom. x. 17. "Incline your ear, come unto me, hear and your souls shall live, And I will make an everlasting covenant with you," &c.

And as it is their duty to hear, so it is their duty to believe, 1 John iii. 23; and by faith to accept and receive Jesus Christ offered to them upon gospel terms of free grace, without money and without price. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," John i. 11, 12. Rev. xxii. 17; Isai. lv. 1—3.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut."

The foolish virgins followed the counsel of the wise, and went to buy oil for themselves; and so do many formal and foolish professors, when they are convinced of their sins, and of their necessity of a Saviour, then they seek after Christ, and cry for grace,

and call upon God for pardoning mercy and salvation, but it is too late. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came."

"And they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." They that were duly prepared for the bridegroom's coming, had an entrance admitted to them into his kingdom, and all others were excluded.

"They that were ready," had put off the filthy rags of their own righteousness, and had put on the robes of Christ's righteousness, Rom. xiii. 14. God had taken away their filthy garments, and had clothed them with change of raiment, Zech. iii. 3, 4. Thus Zion the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is called upon and commanded by the Lord her Maker, her Husband, and her Redeemer, to loose herself from the bands of her neck, her captivity, to arise and put on her beau-

tiful garments, Isai. lii. 1—3. And so she shall do with great joy and rejoicing; and therefore she is prophetically said to do so: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,” Isai. lxi. 10.

And to be prepared for the bridegroom’s coming is to be arrayed in fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints, Rev. xix. 7, 8. And so the holy city, the new Jerusalem, was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, in John’s vision, Rev. xxi. 2. Of this glorious marriage and mystery of Christ and his church, David prophesied, Psal. xlv; wherein we have this great and glorious solemnity of the bridegroom’s coming, and of the marriage of the Lamb, mystically and metaphorically sung and penned down by that sweet singer of Israel in that epithalamium, love-song, or marriage-song. “My

heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. King's daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir. The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle work; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing they shall enter into the King's palace." And so the prophet Ezekiel, describing the church's condition from her cradle to her crown, speaks of her inward and spiritual beauty and glory under divers metaphors, and figurative expressions. "Now when I

passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness which

I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." This prophesy in the mystery of it will be fulfilled when the bridegroom cometh, for then Christ will put on a beautiful crown upon her head, and she will be exceeding beautiful, and she shall then prosper into a kingdom. "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people." "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," Isai. lxii.

3. When will this day of Zion's glory be? then will it be, when the bridegroom cometh and marrieth his bride; "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." And thus the wise virgin saints were prepared and ready, and went in with him to the marriage.

"And the door was shut." There is the door of grace, and that is all opportunities and seasons that the ministers of Christ have and improve to preach, and the people have

and improve to hear the gospel of the grace of God; also to administer and partake of the holy ordinances of God in any place, and at any time, called an open door, Rev. iii. 8. "A great door and effectual is opened unto me," "And a door was opened unto me of the Lord," 2' Cor. ii. 12; that was, a door of grace. And when God removes the candlestick, takes away the gospel, suffering the adversaries to silence and persecute his faithful ministers, and churches of saints, when their ministers by imprisonment or banishment are removed into corners, and their eyes cannot see their teachers; when the people run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, and cannot find it, then the door of grace is shut.

There is also the door of the kingdom of Christ: "When once the master of the house is risen up, and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk

in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But ye shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God," Luke xiii. This is the door that was shut here in my text, to wit, the door of Christ's marriage chamber, that is to say, an entrance and admittance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence, to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

1. Meditation. That all persons, especially virgin professors, ought to prepare, and to be ready, when Christ the churches bridegroom cometh.

To this end, 1. Sinners you must get Jesus Christ; if you will not receive and entertain Christ into your hearts by faith, a true penitent and lively faith, he will not receive and admit you into the marriage chamber of his kingdom, when he comes as the bridegroom. If sinners will not let Christ live in them, and reign in them, in the kingdom of his grace now, they shall not live and reign with him in his kingdom. Christ will shut the door of his kingdom against them that shut the door of their hearts against him.

Therefore sinners, whilst Jesus Christ stands at the door, open the door of your hearts to Christ, and let him come and set up the kingdom of his grace in your hearts, according to his gracious promise: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne. He that hath

an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

2. Saints, you ought to prepare, and be ready to meet Christ the churches bridegroom, when he cometh, and therefore consider what you have to do, ere you and Jesus Christ meet in his marriage kingdom. O gracious and precious saints, have you not something to do ere you die? Can you heartily desire and earnestly pray to be dissolved and be with Christ before you have overcome the world, 1 John v. 4, 5; got the victory over sin, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57; and resisted, vanquished, and made a conquest over the devil, 1 John ii. 13, 14; and in all these to be more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord? Rom. viii. 37. Can you expect to inherit all things, Rev. xxi. 7, until you have overcome all things? our Lord Jesus Christ overcame before he sate down with his Father in his throne. And will Jesus Christ grant you to sit down with him in his throne, until you have also overcome?

Again, consider saints, are you prepared as a bride adorned for her husband? Are you clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and so made ready for the marriage of the Lamb? Or do not some of you stand in need to wash your robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, before you can put on your beautiful garments, and adorn yourselves with ornaments as a bride, or as the bride-maidens, the virgins her companions?

The Lord first washed his people with water, yea, he thoroughly washed away their blood from them, and anointed them with oil, and then he clothed them with brodered work, girded them with linen, and covered them with silk. He decked them also with ornaments, bracelets, jewels, chains of gold and pearl about their neck, and at last he put a beautiful crown upon the churches head, and they prospered into a kingdom. So the apostle testifieth, that Jesus Christ gave himself for his church; "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the wash-

ing of water, by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." O beloved and blessed virgin saints, how much cleansing, purging, sanctifying work is there yet to be done in your souls by the Spirit, and word of God in the lively and powerful applications of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, Heb. ix. 14; xiii. 12.

Once more consider saints, O ye wise virgins, are your vessels full of oil? Are your hearts full of grace? Have you perfected holiness in the fear of God? 2 Cor. vii. 1; And are you "come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man," Ephes. iv. 13. If not, you are not yet so prepared, nor are you yet so ready as you should desire and endeavour to be, and may be through the communication of the exceeding riches of the grace of God, and the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, you may attain to be ere the bridegroom come.

2. Meditation. Whilst some foolish and negligent virgin professors are seeking too late to get, and endeavouring too late to buy the spiritual oil of grace to supply their lamps, Christ will come, and shut the door of his grace and kingdom against them ; “ And the door was shut.”

Some professors being careless and negligent when they enjoy powerful means of grace, as the foolish virgins were when they first went out to meet the bridegroom, content themselves and are satisfied with some spiritual gifts without grace, and the form of godliness without the power of it, as the foolish virgins did that took their lamps, but took no oil with them : and so go on in the broad way of an outward, customary, and formal performance of holy duties, and partaking of gospel ordinances all the day of grace, until the night of security, ease, and darkness overtake them, and they begin to slumber and fall fast asleep in their formality, or in their apostasy, until in some midnight dispensation, a cry with a loud

voice from the Lord, from the city, or from the temple, awaken them and affright them. And then they perceive that their lamps are gone out, and that they themselves are in a state of darkness, wanting Christ and grace in their souls, as the foolish virgins did, who wanted oil in their vessels, and went to buy it. So some formal professors, when it is too late, seek for grace and enquire after Christ; saying as Balaam did, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But their day of grace being past, Christ shuts the door of grace, saying, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still." And Christ will, when he comes as the bridegroom, shut the door of his kingdom against those foolish virgin professors, who refused the offers, calls and invitations of the gospel in the day of grace; read Proverbs i. from verse 20 to the end of the chapter. And as doth plainly appear in the eleventh and twelfth verses of this chapter.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he

answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Afterwards, or last of all, that is, after the wise virgin saints were entered into the marriage chamber with Christ the bridegroom of his church, and after the door of the kingdom of Christ was shut, then came the foolish virgin professors, a multitude or very many formalists and hypocrites, saying "Lord, Lord, open to us." They called and cried earnestly, prayed and beseeched the Lord Jesus Christ again and again to open the door of his kingdom unto them, and let them have an entrance admitted into his everlasting kingdom.

"But he answering, said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." As they were earnest in their request, so was Christ very positive in his answer, "Verily," assuredly, indeed and in truth, "I know you not," I love you not, I do not approve of you, I own you not to be of the number of those that my Father gave me, and whom I redeemed with my blood, and whom I called and sanctified by my spirit and grace, and who

sought to worship God by the Spirit and in truth. I know you not to be the adopted children of my Father, justified and sanctified by faith that is in me. You are formalists and hypocrites, impenitent backsliders and apostates, who have denied my headship, my kingly office, and would not that I should reign over you. In a word, you are workers of iniquity, "Depart from me," I profess I do not know you, so as to approve of you, to own you, to open the door of my kingdom to you, Luke xiii. 24—27.

Meditation. It will be a sad astonishing and miserably woeful condition, that all foolish virgin professors will be in, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall exclude them, and shut them out of his kingdom, and disown them for ever.

Virgin professors having a strong confidence, and great hope and expectation of the pardon of all their sins, and of eternal life and salvation, and then at last find by woeful experience that the Lord hath rejected their confidence, Jer. ii. 37; and their expectations be in vain and perish, Prov. x. 28;

and their hope like the spider's web, Job viii. 13, 14. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God taketh away his soul?" Job xxvii. 8. And that God will not forgive their iniquities, Jer. xiv. 10; xvi. 18; but will give them the wages of their sins, and reward them according to their evil deeds, Rom. ii. 6, 9, 11. Yea, and they having had a strong persuasion or presumption, rather that when Christ comes they shall have an entrance admitted to them into his everlasting kingdom, and at last Christ comes, and shuts the door of the kingdom, and then they come and knock, and say, Lord, Lord, open to us, and be denied and repulsed, and Christ tell them he knows them not, and say, Depart from me ye hypocrites, ye formal professors, ye foolish virgins, and all ye workers of iniquity, what an amazement and astonishment will it be to them? And then they will begin to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;" that is, we have been under the ministry of thy gospel, and all the administrations thereof. We have

been often at the Lord's table, and have been partakers of all the holy ordinances of God: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh."

This verse contains the use that Christ would have his disciples make of this parable, and of his doctrine therein contained, and that is, to watch, "Watch ye therefore;" which exhortation he urgeth from their ignorance of the time when Christ, the churches bridegroom, will come: "For ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh."

From whence two propositions do arise, 1. That the time of Christ's coming, as the bridegroom is not known, to any saint or angel, but to the Father only.

2. That it is the duty of all Christ's disciples to be watching, and waiting daily for the glorious appearance of Christ, who will come as the bridegroom of his church.

Touching the first proposition; "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," Matt. xxiv. 36. And Mark says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father," Mark xiii. 32. Though God the Father hath reserved the knowledge of the day and hour of Christ, the bridegroom's coming, in his own secret decree, yet hath he given forth and revealed some signs of his coming, which are recorded in the holy scriptures of truth, which his disciples being desirous to know, asked him, saying, "And what shall be the sign of thy coming?" Unto which question Christ answered many

things, but more particularly he told them,
 1. That his saints and servants should suffer great persecutions, Matt. xxiv. 9; Luke xxi. 12, 16, 17. 2. That iniquity shall abound, and the love of many wax cold. 3. That the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations. 4. That then shall be great tribulation, such as never was, no, nor ever shall be. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, Matt. xxiv.

Touching the second proposition, read Matt. xxiv. 42; Luke xxi. 36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." They that would be accounted worthy to stand before Christ the bridegroom when he comes, must watch and pray continually.

Watching implies, 1. That professors, Christ's disciples ought to be awake: "And

that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." "Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

2. That professors are to be in a continual expectation of Christ's glorious appearance, as they that watch for the morning: "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning." And Luke xii.; "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

3. That professors be looking out, desirous of, and longing for, the coming and kingdom of Christ; "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

Watching is a necessary duty incumbent upon christians at all times, in all things. It is our duty in every duty: We ought to watch and pray, Matt. xxvi. 41; to watch unto prayer, 1 Pet. iv. 7; and to watch after prayer, and wait for the return and answer of our prayers. Christians ought to watch their hearts, thoughts, and affections; they ought to set a watch before the door of their lips, that their tongues do not offend; and they ought to watch their lives and conversations in their callings and employments in the world. But especially christians ought to watch for the glorious appearance of the bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, Matt. xxiv. 42; and they ought to be in a watching posture, and upon watching work or duty, especially when they hear of his near

approach. Yea, and it is the duty of believers to be upon their watch all the mystical night, until the bridegroom come.

The word, Watch, is borrowed from shepherds, or soldiers, or seamen, or porters, or citizens, who use to watch in the night season. The Jews divided the night into three watches, whereof the first began at twilight, and continued till midnight, called the beginning of watches, Lam. ii. 19. The second watch began at midnight, and continued until the cock-crowing, called the middle watch, Judges vii. 19. And the third watch was from the cock-crowing till sun-rising, called the morning-watch, Exod. xiv. 24. And according to this Hebrew dialect and division of the mystical night in this parable, the time of this duty to be attended, was the morning watch, for midnight was past, and the day of Christ was dawning, or near approaching, Behold the bridegroom comes; watch ye therefore, &c. as they, Psal. cxxx. 5, 6.

Query. “ Watchmen, what of the night?”

Answer. “ The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye,” &c. Isai xxi. 11, 12; viz. That morning when the righteous shall have the dominion, Psal. xlix. 14; and also the night, even that night of mystical Babylon’s destruction, foretold in Rev. xviii.

But more particularly, That we may the better understand what time of the mystical night it is with us in our land-horizon, it may be considered, that after that fair sunshine day of the gospel, (in the days of Christ and his apostles,) had continued for some years, a night of great darkness and bloody persecution began, which continued to the reign of Constantine the great: and that was the first watch of our mystical night. And after the moonshine reformation during Constantine’s time, the Arian clouds of mystical darkness overspread the face of the ecclesiastical heavens; and at last the beast opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened, by reason of the

smoke of the pit, Rev. ix. 1—3; and this dark midnight dispensation will continue till within three or four hours of the sun rising. And this is the second watch of the mystical night of popery, and persecution. So that the morning watch is the third and next, which will continue till the sun of righteousness arise; which watch will begin at, or about the time of the beast's killing Christ's witnesses, and will continue about three and a half prophetic days of years, Rev. xi. 7, 11, 15. During that time of the witnesses lying dead, Rev. xi. 8, 9, the wise virgins are commanded to watch, Matt. xxv. 13.

And they ought to be in a watching posture, that is to say, waking, waiting, looking, longing for, and believing the near approach and sudden coming of the bridegroom, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ. And also about watching work; to wit, doing the work of their generation, in bearing their witness for Christ, against antichrist, his ministry, magistracy, churches, worship, ordinances, and discipline; and in finishing

their testimony of the kingdom, and dominion of Christ, against the kingdom and dominion of antichrist. That when Christ comes and finds them so doing, he may say, Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your master. So the wise virgins being thus prepared and ready, they may enter into the marriage chamber with the bridegroom when he comes.

THE END.

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